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# Security Council

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**7540**th meeting
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New York

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| *President*: | Mr. García Margallo | (Spain) |
| *Members*: | Angola | Ms. Jorge |
| | Chad | Mr. Mahamat Zene |
| | Chile | Mr. Barros Melet |
| | China | Mr. Liu Song |
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| | Jordan | Mr. Omaish |
| | Lithuania | Ms. Gleveckaitė |
| | Malaysia | Mrs. Adnin |
| | New Zealand | Mr. Van Bohemen |
| | Nigeria | Mr. Aliyu |
| | Russian Federation | Mr. Safronkov |
| | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | Mr. Hickey |
| | United States of America | Mr. Wagner |
| | Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) | Ms. Rodríguez Gómez |

## Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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*The meeting resumed at 3.05 p.m.*

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to remind all speakers to kindly limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing, and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber in order for us to work more efficiently. I would also like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that the interpretration can be provided accurately.

I now give the floor to Mr. Børge Brende, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway.

**Mr. Brende** (Norway): Mr. President, I thank you for this initiative. It is a very important meeting. With the ongoing war in Syria and its escalating humanitarian consequences both in the region and in Europe, it is with deep concern that we have witnessed the vicious cycle of escalating violence and tensions in Israel and Palestine during the past weeks. The process of finding a negotiated end to the conflict by establishing two States living side by side in peace and security is stuck. The two peoples now live side by side in fear, anger and distress.

I would like to make three observations.

First, I welcome all efforts to promote calm, encourage restraint and prevent actions that further exacerbate tensions, in particular around the holy sites in Jerusalem. But more needs to be done. I call on every politician, community elder and religious leader to refrain from reckless and inflammatory statements and actions; reject the extremists who pursue a political agenda to turn the current situation into a religious conflict; condemn all acts of terror; and show respect for the sanctity and the dignity of the holy sites. I welcome commitments to maintaining the status quo at the holy esplanade. Security coordination between Israelis and Palestinians must continue. Like every other State, Israel has the right to take necessary measures to protect its citizens against violence and unprovoked killings. At the same time, measures construed as collective punishments, such as house demolitions, should stop immediately, both in Jerusalem and on the West Bank, as they feed violence.

Secondly, I call for a return to a credible political process. While tensions at the holy sites in Jerusalem instigated the current crisis, lack of hope for a better political future contributes to increased frustration and anger among the Palestinian youth. No amount of frustration justifies violence. Still, the crisis cannot be resolved through de-escalation and security measures alone. The current tensions call for immediate and coordinated political steps by both sides. Israel should stop building new settlements on occupied land and expanding existing ones. Such building undermines any political process and turns hope into frustration, anger and rage. Palestine needs to reform and strengthen its political institutions and governance structures. In particular, the West Bank and Gaza need to be reintegrated into one authority that fully respects the parameters of the security agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Thirdly, cooperation on tangible measures to strengthen the Palestinian economy and the reconstruction of Gaza can pave the way for the political process. Last month, I chaired the meeting of the donors group, the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, here in New York. The donors reiterated their continued commitment to supporting the establishment of capable and robust Palestinian institutions and a viable economy. Measures need to be undertaken in the West Bank, Gaza and Area C. Unresolved issues related to the Paris Protocol need to be resolved without delay. Donors cannot be expected to compensate for unresolved economic issues between the two parties. I urge the donors to increase their support.

It is clear, however, that no donor support can substitute or compensate for inadequate measures by the Palestinian Authority or by Israel themselves. Also, achieving the full potential of a Palestinian State with well-functioning political and governmental institutions, including a sustainable economy, requires a political resolution of the conflict. I therefore welcome the interest expressed by both sides in doing more and in working harder together to improve the Palestinian economy and reconstruct Gaza.

Direct economic cooperation is no substitute for a political process, but may help to build stability and establish better grounds for the political process. While the parties themselves hold the keys to resuming talks, the international community needs to engage and support them in a concerted manner that can bring the conflict to a resolution. Business as usual cannot continue.

I started my statement by referring to Syria. To facilitate a more coherent and better funded response to

the humanitarian needs, Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom and Kuwait are cooperating to convene a donor conference next year. We hope that, while we struggle to find a political solution to the conflict, we can develop ways and means to better face the humanitarian challenges.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

**Mr. Al-Attiyah** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): We congratulate you, Sir, on your country's accession to the presidency of the Security Council and thank you for presiding personally over today's meeting and for the invitation to participate in this debate at a time when the Middle East region is heading into an extremely grave situation. We also wish to thank Spain for its role in promoting peace in the region and Mr. Jan Eliasson for his briefing.

The Council is meeting today to consider the situation that is unfolding as a result of the serious escalation in the activities of the Israeli Defense Forces against the Palestinian people. Anyone who has followed the situation knows that the situation is the result of the occupation, with its illegal settlements, its discrimination against the Palestinian people, its violation of their rights and basic freedoms, its denial of access to natural resources and its stifling economic blockade. The Palestinians are currently the object of crimes committed by Israeli extremists, who act with impunity.

The Palestinian people have taken to the streets yet again in order to express their rage for reasons that are perfectly understandable. They are a people whose land has been occupied and who are subjected to humiliation daily. Their land is constantly being usurped and confiscated in order to build settlements. We can all bear witness to that, and today we are here to discuss a question of major importance that weighs heavily not only on the shoulders of the Arab and Muslim peoples but that unites all the world's democracies. It has been impossible to resolve the dispute, because the international community is not prepared to impose a just solution. The Palestinian people are being held hostage to the balance of power between the occupying Power and the occupied people.

Negotiations have therefore lost their value. Talks have not been held on a continuing basis, and Israel has adopted the practice of annexing forcibly occupied land in Jerusalem and in the Golan. The Gaza Strip has been under siege for years, and wars have been unleashed against anyone who resisted. Finally, there are those who are bent on blocking access to the holy sites in Jerusalem, which could even lead to the division of the space. Those groups are an integral part of the Israeli Government.

The Palestinian people take to the street to be heard, not because they seek mercy or pity. The Palestinian people have dignity. They are the original population. They take to the street to say that they reject humiliation and occupation and that they do not accept the international indifference that has allowed a just cause to go without response for decades. Apartheid is over, but in Palestine, for all intents and purposes, it is on the verge of being restored. Here, I would like to point out that the generation that has taken to the streets and that is being subjected to summary executions is demanding a solution based on the 1967 borders before it is too late. The elements on the ground presage terrible results.

The people of the region are facing a new tragedy that risks exacerbating the question of Syria, which is an international question. Despite the suffering of the Syrian people, the international community has not attempted to resolve it. The international community has proof of the use of chemical weapons and barrel bombs, and there has been a mass exodus of people, yet the regime remains in place, because no one has put an end to its excesses.

We have discussed the matter many times but no one has replied to the question of why we have not provided protection to Syrian civilians or why we have not succeeded in protecting them. I do not think there is a convincing answer to that question. We continue to speak about combating terrorism. We all face that danger, and we must all work to combat it, but the Syrians believe that the main problem is State terrorism. Unfortunately, opposition to the Syrian regime no longer rests simply on the fact that it is a criminal regime that commits crimes against humanity. Now it is a matter of seeing whether or not there is a point in combating terrorism. That is exactly what the Syrian people were afraid of. What we need to do today is to agree again to implement the Final Communiqué of the Action Group for Syria of 30 June 2012 (S/2012/523, annex), establishing a transitional authority with the executive power to address the demands of the Syrian revolution while preserving that country's sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity. Such a solution would spare the world the dangers of terrorism.

Now we must seriously address the task of finding a solution to the destructive mechanism that has led to the total destruction of Syria and turned its people into refugees in our countries and all over the world. We can testify to the gravity of the situation just by counting the number of victims. The situation in Syria is a tragedy that will remain etched in human memory. Unfortunately, the international community has chosen to respond based on self-interest. We used to believe that the solution for Syria should, above all, be a political one, but have we asked ourselves what we have done to improve the situation and whether we have acted with courage to protect those who need our protection? By that, I mean the Syrian people and none other.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden.

**Ms. Wallström** (Sweden): I thank Spain for organizing this timely meeting and Foreign Minister García Margallo for presiding over it. I would also like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his strong remarks and strong message to us this morning.

I welcome the Secretary-General's visit to the region, and, as he said in Jerusalem earlier this week, the terror attacks against civilians are deplorable. Such random attacks make every place unsafe and every person a potential victim. We are, of course, deeply concerned about the deaths on both sides, with nearly 2,000 injured so far in October, a vast majority of whom were Palestinians. The Israeli response must be proportionate. All perpetrators must be brought to justice and excessive use of force must not be used. There is an urgent need for leadership, responsibility and restraint.

One year ago, Sweden decided to recognize the State of Palestine. Our recognition aimed at making the parties to the conflict less unequal. It aimed at supporting moderate Palestinians and Israelis alike, providing a positive input into the dynamics of the dormant Middle East peace process and at sending a clear and convincing message of hope to younger generations that there is an alternative to violence and to the so-called status quo. As we have seen in recent weeks, the absence of hope is one of the greatest challenges facing the prospect of peace and the vision of a two-State solution.

But we believe that it is not too late for initiatives for de-escalation, confidence-building and peace in the region. It is time to create conditions for a results-oriented peace process, including confidence-building measures such as settlement freezes. Now it is time for the full implementation of agreements reached between Palestine and Israel. Now is time to end the isolation of Gaza and for all factions in Palestine to cooperate. Now it is time to remove obstacles to economic development in all of Palestine, including that of limited access to Area C and Gaza. Now it is time for an international recommitment regarding clear parameters and realistic time frames for negotiations and an end to the occupation. We must not lose track of the real goal: a negotiated two-State solution and an end of the occupation where both Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace and security, and the Council should lead the way.

The recent escalation of the violence in Syria is deeply concerning, and the present situation, more than ever, calls for the complete, genuine and concrete support of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura and a political solution. That humanitarian crisis is the world's largest in modern times, and my country, Sweden, shoulders its responsibility in three ways.

First, we are currently receiving 3,000 Syrian refugees every week, and to date we have received 100,000, although I know it is a small number compared to the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Secondly, Sweden has so far contributed over $213 million in humanitarian assistance. Thirdly, in addition to our humanitarian assistance, Sweden will allocate another $220 million over the coming five years, through a new Syrian crisis strategy. I want to encourage all others present here to also step up their engagement. I know that many are already doing a lot.

Throughout the conflict in Syria, women and girls have been targeted on the basis of their gender. Sexual violence is systematic and widespread among many warring parties, including its use as a tactic of terror by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. But Syrian women are not only victims; they are also actors. That is why I am hosting a meeting on Syrian women peacebuilders tomorrow morning. It is important to look upon women as actors of change who want to be given a voice in any discussions about the future of Syria.

Lebanon is one of the countries most affected by the conflict in Syria. Domestic stability in Lebanon is key, and Lebanese leaders need to set their differences aside and elect a new President without any further delay. But Lebanon also needs and deserves more international

support. Lebanon, led ably by Prime Minister Tammam Salam, is hosting more than 1.2 million refugees who have fled the war in Syria. Our substantial humanitarian assistance and our contribution to the Trust Fund for Lebanon, managed by the World Bank, will soon be complemented by increased development assistance. I strongly encourage others to follow suit.

As already mentioned, the vicious cycle of direct and indirect violence has to be broken. Security cannot be achieved through bombs or rockets, war or violence, humiliation or threats. Genuine security can be achieved only through peace. We need to take our responsibility. We owe that to the children and future generations in Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and other countries in the region. We need to restore the hope of a better future.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Maldives.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Maldives): It is an honour to speak before the Council today on the question of Palestine. It is an issue of profound importance to the Government and people of the Maldives. I would like to extend my thanks to Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain and President of the Security Council for the month of October, for convening this timely debate on the question of Palestine. My delegation wishes to further express our sincere appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for his recent visit to the region, which is yet another in a series of visits, in continuation of his tireless efforts in search of peace.

In two days' time, we will be marking the seventieth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations. The United Nations has been a force for good for all humankind. It has helped in ending conflicts and in making peace. It has saved millions of people from oppression, colonialism and military occupation. Yet the United Nations has been helpless in ending Israel's subjugation of Palestinians. Israel's continued illegal occupation of Palestine epitomizes a deep malaise in the international system that we have to address.

For decades, the international community has sought the realization of a two-State solution, reaffirmed by United Nations resolutions, the Madrid Principles, the Oslo accords, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map. Those efforts attempt to succeed against a system of institutionalized occupation and apartheid that tries to alter the mindsets of generations who have grown up under occupation and whose reality is one of fear, hatred and violence. Those efforts have failed a people, a nation, a region and the entire international community.

The recent violence that has broken out in Jerusalem and across the occupied territories paints a bleak picture. In the past weeks, we have seen violence and counter-reprisals escalate sharply. That the Old City of Jerusalem has been shut to Palestinians is a clear illustration of the gravity of the current situation. The sanctity of the Haram Al-Sharif must be restored. Granting Palestinians their rightful access is a first step to further the peace process. Israel must stop altering the Islamic and Arabic character of the city.

Every year, thousands of Israeli settlers move into the occupied territories illegally. The combination of increasingly belligerent political rhetoric and the enforced physical and demographic changes to the occupied Palestinian territories continually reduces the chances for peace. That window is steadily closing. The Secretary-General, on his latest trip to the occupied Palestine, highlighted that, when he said: "What is missing is the resolve to restore a political horizon for talks and a political process that delivers real results and hope".

It is a sad reality that today there is an absence of hope and that despair has grabbed hold of a people who have nothing left to lose, and that conditions for further violence are being fermented. It is no coincidence that the second Intifada broke out six weeks after the collapse of the Camp David summit, nor is it an accident that violence broke out last summer following the collapse of the United States-led peace effort. In the absence of hope and in the face of oppression, there is only violence and hatred. Such hatred has bred extremism, fostered radicalism and consumed the entire region.

The Maldives has repeatedly called for the community of nations to be more vigilant in addressing the issues of borders, refugees, settlements and Jerusalem in the quest for a comprehensive and sustained peace. The Maldives reiterates its support for full recognition of an independent State of Palestine within its pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We have underscored the importance of greater involvement on the part of the international community, particularly the Council, in the settlement of a negotiated peace.

The Maldives urges the Security Council to fulfil its primary responsibility for maintaining international

peace and security. We urge it to take the firm measures that are needed to end Israel's illegal occupation of Palestine and its apartheid practices there. It is time that the Council demanded an end to the illegal occupation and to the oppression of the Palestinian people. The United Nations must take the lead in steering the peace process from passive rhetoric to pragmatic action. The right to live life in peace is as much one for each and every Palestinian as it is for each of us here today.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

**Ms. Rodríguez Pineda** (Guatemala): My delegation appreciates the presence of Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, in today's debate, and is grateful for the Deputy Secretary-General's informative briefing.

Guatemala is extremely concerned about the current situation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory, Israel and, especially, Jerusalem. The situation has been complicated by the increase in direct clashes between Palestinians and Israel's security forces, together with the expansion of settlements and the forced displacement of Palestinians. Such violence undermines the possibility for finding a political horizon that meets the legitimate needs of both peoples and can enable them to reach a just and final settlement. We believe that that can be achieved only through the establishment of a Palestinian State coexisting in peace with Israel, and not through the commission of violent acts. It is essential that any measure designed to maintain peace and security in the region take that ultimate goal into account. The walls and checkpoints, the violent responses from the security forces and the demolition of homes, along with violent attacks by individuals and groups and rocket fire, are not things that will help to solve this conflict.

The most urgent challenge we are facing is to halt the spiral of violence and preventing any further loss of life. We are particularly concerned about the repeated provocations that have occurred in the holy sites of Jerusalem, as well as the disproportionate actions that have been taken in that context. It is vital that political, community and religious Palestinian and Israeli leaders stand firm against terrorism, violence and incitement. In that regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's the rapid response and his visit to the region to ask the parties to stop the violence.

Whatever happens, the current crisis cannot be resolved by adopting security measures. The unending occupation and Palestinians' reduced prospects for their aspirations to establish a State also increase frustration and despair, while the severe economic situation, including the high unemployment in the area, exacerbates such feelings. Similarly, the continued and increasing expansion of settlements diminishes hope and the potential for a viable Palestinian State. This loss of any political prospects is the single most detrimental factor contributing to the violence we are seeing.

The only thing that can break this cycle of violence and fear is the establishment of a political horizon. We hope that the Security Council can redouble its efforts to create conditions conducive to a resumption of meaningful negotiations. In that regard, we join with the various calls that have been made to find mechanisms that will enable us to relaunch the political process. Similarly, we recognize the value of the principle of shared responsibility, and in that regard, we believe that the active diplomatic participation of the Quartet in the Middle East peace process can generate new momentum for the parties to take responsible steps towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. We also see the benefits that could result from an expanded Quartet that includes other key actors in the region.

This is a good moment for us to rethink how we can make progress and conclude the peace talks that can enable us to work on measures aimed at confidence-building and promoting Palestinian reconciliation, issues that are critical to ensuring that the parties commit to peace. We cannot stand idly by. However, it must be the parties themselves, those with a principal interest in reaching a mutually satisfactory solution, who must commit to making a real and renewed effort. It is they who must strengthen their confidence and commitment to the option of peace and coexistence of two States, Israel and Palestine, side by side in peace and security.

In conclusion, Guatemala acknowledges the enormous challenges that lie ahead, but it is our political and historical responsibility as members of the international community to support every possible means and effort to overcome them.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Lebanon.

**Mr. Salam** (Lebanon): The situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is indeed alarming. According

to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the past two weeks have witnessed the highest number of fatalities and injuries in the West Bank since 2005. That in itself not only justifies the call for this high-level debate, which we would like to thank Spain for organizing, it also calls for swift action by the Security Council.

Since the beginning of this month, on average two Palestinians have been killed every day, and more than 1,000 have been injured, not to mention the increasing number of attacks by settlers on Palestinian property. Israeli provocations and assaults at the Haram Al-Sharif have continued, in an obvious attempt to change the agreed status quo by establishing a temporal if not geographical division of the holy site, contrary to the claims of Mr. Netanyahu.

Israel, the occupying Power, is once again acting in total disregard of its obligations under international law and international humanitarian law to protect civilian Palestinians. That is why we are once again calling on the Council to use all possible ways and means at its disposal to ensure the protection of the endangered lives and property of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, pending its assumption of its full duty and responsibility to end the Israeli occupation and help the Palestinian State to achieve its independence.

The events of the past month are only the tip of the iceberg of the occupation, which has now lasted almost 50 years. In fact, the need to provide international protection for the Palestinians who are under Israeli occupation is self-evident when we recall the fate of the most vulnerable Palestinians, the children living under occupation. We have only to note that, between 2000 and 2013, one Palestinian child was killed by the Israeli occupying forces every three days, and that 62 per cent of the 95,000 Palestinian children detained by the Israelis since 1967 have probably been subjected to some form of physical violence. And how can one omit to mention the case of the two Palestinian children who were recently burned to death by extremist Israeli settlers — 18-month-old Ali Dawabsheh, who was killed in July in an arson attack in Douma, and Mohammed Abu Khdeir, a 16-year-old Palestinian, who was kidnapped, beaten and burned alive by Israeli settlers in East Jerusalem in August 2014.

Notwithstanding such acts of appalling savagery, Benjamin Netanyahu, in total contempt for our intelligence, dared to claim in his latest speech before the General Assembly that "Israel is civilization's front line in the battle against barbarism" (*A/70/PV.22*). Moreover, instead of facing the reality of the occupation and its inherently oppressive structure and repressive methods, Israeli officials and their propaganda endeavour to represent the mounting violence in the West Bank and Gaza as an eruption of so-called terrorist hatred, motivated by nothing else but pure anti-Semitism and bloodthirsty Islamic fanaticism.

I am sure that we all recognize a familiar situation here — that of blaming the victim. We are reminded of William Ryan's famous book, *Blaming the Victim*, a 1971 classic that shows how victim-blaming functions as an ideology that is used to divert responsibility and to justify racism and social injustice. In fact, blaming the victim is so odious that it was rightly depicted by one of the great twentieth century thinkers as "one of the most sinister features of the fascist character".

In Israel, like elsewhere, racism is not only blind, it is also deadly. We only have to consider how on Monday, Haltom Zarhum, an innocent Eritrean asylum seeker fleeing the scene of acts of violence, was shot, then lynched. That dismaying attack is documented in videos in which an angry Israeli mob is shown hurling benches and chairs and kicking him in the head, assuming he was an Arab terrorist just because he was dark-skinned, all the while screaming things like "Death to Arabs!" It is worth asking Mr. Netanyahu whether that is another example of Israel as "civilization's front line in the battle against barbarism". Obviously, we do not have the same lexicon as Mr. Netanyahu, because, in our lexicon, racism and xenophobia, let alone acts of burning people alive and lynching, are examples of barbarism and not of civilization.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is very alarming. Not only can the Council prevent the situation from deteriorating, it can also unlock the path to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, provided that it resolves to act on the basis of the principles and rules of international law and international humanitarian law. Here, to seek balance, where no balance exists or can exist between the occupier and the occupied, is not justice. It is not even a travesty of justice, it is injustice, plain and simple. Conversely, pending the end of the Israeli occupation, the Council can and must move now to provide international protection for the Palestinian people, the sooner the better, for the relevance of the Council and, above all, for the just cause of peace in our part of the world.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

**Mr. Aboulatta** (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to congratulate Minister José Manuel García Margallo on his delegation's assumption of the presidency during this month of October. We are confident that the work of the Council will be successful in this period of escalating developments that are having a serious and negative effect on the Middle East.

Since the beginning of this month, the situation in holy Jerusalem, in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly aound the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Haram Al-Sharif, has deteriorated quickly and is threatening to worsen. After decades of occupation and suffering and the frustration of their hopes to establish an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, the Palestinian people find themselves in a painful situation. They are still under Israeli occupation and have to deal with the shortsighted security policies of the longest occupation in history, with no prospects for a decent life in the near future. Statistics indicate that the unemployment rate among the young people in Jerusalem is approximately 68 per cent, and 44,000 housing units are in danger of collapsing.

In addition to the violence committed by the settlers and their attacks on the dignity and physical safety of the Palestinian people and the confiscation of Palestinian land, particularly the holy sites, which are extremely important to more than 1 billion Muslims around the world, there are ongoing attempts to change the spatial and temporal character of all Islamic holy sites. That is an extremely dangerous attack, not only on the occupied Palestinian territories but also on the Middle East as a whole. It kills hope and removes any prospects for settling this issue.

Egypt strongly condemns all violence committed in the occupied Palestinian territories, including in Jerusalem, by the Israeli side and its use of incommensurate and oppressive means in dealing with the situation, which has led to deaths and injuries, including among children and women. It considers the actions committed by the settlers against Palestinians to be crimes that can only fuel feelings of hatred and dissension. The situation requires serious consideration by the Council. The international community as a whole, and the Security Council in particular, are under a serious obligation to take the necessary action as soon as possible to address those threats to peace and security in the Middle East. The Security Council should uphold its responsibilities, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, given the many important resolutions that have not been adopted so far. The reasons for that failure to act are known to all and include attempts by certain parties to protect the Israeli occupation, even though it is morally and politically unjustifiable. The failure to act prevents the Palestinians from receiving protection, and that threatens further escalation of tensions in the near future.

In order to safeguard its credibility, the Security Council must to adopt the necessary resolutions and adopt a firm approach in applying principled diplomacy, so as to reach the desired objective of settling the Palestinian question. That should be carried out within the context of a peaceful process that takes into account all important aspects, including the approaches to a final solution, which have been under consideration for more than two decades. There is no need to reinvent the wheel, and the Council should tackle the situation immediately, so that Israel does not have more time to continue devouring Palestinian territories despite the condemnation of the international community. Egypt believes that the Palestinian people have the right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and that is the only way to achieve stability in the Middle East.

We therefore support all efforts, particularly those of Jordan, aimed at addressing the Palestinian question, in particular efforts to contain the current crisis at the holy sites, stop the fighting and discourage any provocative incitement to violence. We call upon the Israeli Government to take history into account, particularly in Jerusalem, and put an end to all attacks on Islamic holy sites and give priority to resuming negotiations, the freezing of which has led to the current serious escalation.

The Palestinian question is the most important issue for the Arab world. Any additional procrastination will further complicate the crisis; the time to deal with it is now.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

**Mr. Khoshroo** (Islamic Republic of Iran): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). I wish to convey the Movement's appreciation to the Spanish presidency and to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. José Manuel

García Margallo, for convening today's open debate. I also wish to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his briefing.

In these days of tragedy that starkly remind us of the continuing plight of the Palestinian people resulting from the denial of their rights and the grave injustices inflicted upon them for decades, the Non-Aligned Movement takes this opportunity to reaffirm its long-standing solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterates its support for the realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights, including their right to self-determination and freedom in their independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, together with a just solution for the plight of the Palestine refugees pursuant to General Assembly resolution 194 (III) of 11 December 1948.

Today, the situation in occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem, continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate, as a result of Israel's crimes and violations against the Palestinian people. More than 49 Palestinians, including children, have been killed by the Israeli occupying forces, and more than 1,800 Palestinians have been injured, many severely, by the live ammunition and other weaponry used excessively and indiscriminately by the occupying Power against the defenceless civilian population under its occupation. That situation requires immediate attention by the international community, in particular the Security Council, which must act to bring a halt to all such violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, committed by the occupying Power, which is further destabilizing the situation and threatening international peace and security.

The Movement strongly condemns all acts of violence and the provocations and incitement committed by the Israeli occupying forces and extremists at the sensitive holy site, which threaten to further destabilize the already fragile situation with far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond. NAM believes that the continuation of Israel's illegal settlement campaign, which is at the core of the 48-year foreign occupation, remains the major obstacle to peace, undermining all efforts to resume a credible peace process and casting serious doubts on Israel's alleged commitment to ending its foreign occupation of Palestinian land and achieving the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

NAM calls once again upon the international community to act collectively and forthwith to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destructive and illegal practices and abide by all its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. The Security Council, in particular, must uphold the duties assigned to it by the Charter to address the situation and act with urgency to implement its own resolutions, respond to those critical developments and advance a peaceful solution based on United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The current dangerous situation, including in occupied East Jerusalem, cannot abide further delay or aggravation. The time to act is now to save innocent civilian lives, including by providing protection to the Palestinian people, in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law, and to revive the gravely diminished prospects for peace.

The Security Council cannot remain on the sidelines in the quest for a just and peaceful solution to the question of Palestine. NAM again urges the Security Council to act resolutely and forthwith to end the plight of the Palestinian people and the Israeli occupation, support the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and establish peace and security by resolving this prolonged conflict, which has so severely destabilized the region and undermined international law and the international system as a whole.

Lebanon continues to suffer from continuing Israeli violations of its borders and incursions against its territory, along with years of occupation and aggression. Unfortunately, Israel continues to violate Lebanese airspace and has been intensifying its incursions over Lebanon. Such activities are a blatant violation of Lebanese sovereignty and the relevant international resolutions, in particular resolution 1701 (2006). The provisions of that resolution should be implemented in a manner that ensures the strengthening of the foundations of stability and security in Lebanon and prevents Israel from undertaking its daily violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, the Movement condemns all measures taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical and demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, which have intensified since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis.

The Non-Aligned Movement demands once again that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

**Mr. De Aguiar de Patriota** (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the presidency of Spain for having organized today's debate.

(*spoke in English*)

I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing. Brazil wishes to acknowledge the statements made by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine, Mr. Riad Malki, and by the Permanent Representative of Israel. The Secretary-General's trip to the Middle East was timely and underlined the sense of urgency that the issue at hand deserves.

Brazil is seriously concerned about the severe upsurge in violence in Palestine and Israel. We call upon the authorities of both countries to do their utmost to halt the current escalation. It is about time for the Security Council fully to assume its responsibilities under the United Nations Charter and actively support and steer the peace process towards a two-State solution.

Unfortunately, we cannot say that this tragic deterioration was unexpected. Many delegations, including Brazil, have repeatedly called for an end to illegal and provocative actions, in particular the expansion of Israeli settlement activities. The spontaneous and mostly uncoordinated nature of the many violent incidents does not render them justifiable.

Taking into account the present disturbing state of affairs, Brazil deems it important that the international community respond to the request made by President Mahmoud Abbas by carefully examining different modalities for international protection. We also believe that the United Nations membership at large should discuss alternative approaches to engage the parties in negotiations and support avenues leading to a peaceful solution to the conflict that is based on international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Brazil remains convinced that effective prospects for peace require the establishment of a Palestinian State that is sovereign, economically viable and territorially contiguous, side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders based on the 1967 lines.

The spiral of violence and destruction in Syria continues to worsen, leading to a continuous deterioration in the humanitarian situation, despite the general recognition that there is no military solution to the conflict. A genuine and inclusive dialogue based on full respect for human rights and the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Syria is as urgent as ever. We reiterate our support for the work of Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura as well as the Human Rights Council's international Independent Commission of Inquiry on Syria, headed by Professor Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro.

Brazil condemns in the strongest terms the use of any toxic chemical as a weapon and firmly supports the establishment of the joint investigative mechanism by the Security Council. The attacks against the civilian population, including the use of barrel bombs, are inhumane and intolerable. Brazil urges all parties to the conflict to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

We applaud the work done by the United Nations agencies to help the millions of people in need and the generosity of many countries in the region which have been receiving the bulk of Syrian refugees. Brazil is contributing to these humanitarian efforts. We have issued more than 8,000 entry visas for Syrian residents affected by the crisis and provided food and medicine through United Nations agencies to help alleviate the dire situation faced by refugees and displaced persons in the region. We will continue to welcome, within our capacity and resources, those who have had to flee their home country and need a place to restart their lives.

We are glad that in Yemen the Government of President Hadi Mansour has agreed to participate in a new round of consultations, under the auspices of the United Nations, in order to seek understanding on how to put an end to the conflict. Brazil supports United Nations efforts to bring the parties to the negotiating table and engage them in the process of seeking a diplomatic solution without any further delay.

Brazil is united by both historical and cultural ties with Lebanon, where peace and stability must be firmly upheld by the international community. We underscore the instrumental role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, whose Maritime Task Force has been led by a Brazilian navy admiral since 2011.

We urge all Lebanese political actors to embrace the path of understanding and end the presidential vacuum without further delay.

The dire humanitarian situation in Libya and the negative impact of the Libyan crisis on regional stability requires our continued attention. We call on all parties to the Libyan conflict to cease hostilities and favour dialogue by remaining engaged in constructive political negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, with a view to achieving a Government of national accord.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States.

**Mr. Elaraby** (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Sir, and the Spanish presidency for having convened this very important meeting, which is taking place at a time when the Middle East is facing serious challenges and threats of all kinds, for which the Security Council is responsible at the political, legal and moral levels, given current developments and their serious impact on the peoples of the region.

However, the Council is not adopting any resolutions to tackle these very serious crises in the region, either in Palestine or in Syria. It must also face the threat of terrorist groups, which have turned the region into a breeding ground from which to spread their influence, while threatening both the region and the independence and sovereignty of States. This requires a review of the Council's mechanisms and of the resolutions it has adopted, as well as their follow-up and the commitment of States to abide by them.

Given the explosive situation in the region, the Palestinian question remains the central issue on which peace and security in the Middle East hinge. For decades now, the Council has continuously considered the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, given the ongoing escalation and the serious violations committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people and their rights and against the holy sites of both Islam and Christianity, in particular Al-Quds and the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Unarmed Palestinians are the victims of massacres, lynchings and collective punishment. All of this represents a violation of international law, the will of the international community and the inalienable legal rights of the Palestinian people. The Israeli Government is solely responsible for the impact of these actions, which have jeopardized international peace and security in the Middle East throughout the occupation.

I am speaking today on behalf of the League of Arab States, which adopted a decision on 13 October asking for the protection of the Palestinian people and the holy Christian and Muslim sites. This is not the first time that the League has asked the Security Council to take urgent steps to implement resolutions on the occupied Palestinian territories and guarantee international protection for the Palestinian people and the holy sites.

I ask, how long will the Israeli occupation last? Until when will the international community, represented by the Security Council, stand idly by, unable to put an end to the occupation or achieve a lasting and permanent settlement on the basis of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on this issue?

The lack of effectiveness and efficiency of the Council given current developments only aggravates the deterioration of the situation, taking it ever further away from international legality. The Council of the League of Arab States has repeatedly warned against the situation and the non-respect by Israel of United Nations resolutions on the issue. A great many of these have been adopted over the past 50 years, such as, for example, resolution 181 (II), 242 (1967), 267 (1969), 338 (1973) and many others asking Israel to withdraw from the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories in order to resolve the conflict.

The Security Council has never witnessed such a precedent, in which manipulation and blackmail by a State that disregards international law and commits war crimes is allowed. Ensuring international protection has now become the most urgent question, as this is a legal requirement given the situation and the need to achieve the peace to which we aspire. The need for international protection for Palestinian civilians is stipulated in the provisions of international legality and resolutions on Palestine.

Since the emergence of the Palestinian question, in the days of the League of Nations when the territory was under a mandate, the situation has been the responsibility of the international community.

The International Court of Justice, in a well-known Advisory Opinion issued in 1950, stipulated the following:

(*spoke in English*)

> "Two principles were considered to be of paramount importance: the principle of non-annexation and the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples, those under the mandate, formed a sacred trust of civilization."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The legal study of the Secretary-General adopted yesterday refers to this, for which I thank him.

(*spoke in English*)

The International Court of Justice confirmed that the mandate remained valid after the determination of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

This international protection through the United Nations can be easily carried out. In that connection, I recall the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), established pursuant to resolution 73 (1949), which stipulates that the Secretary-General could take all necessary steps to use as many United Nations staff members as necessary to ensure that the truce is respected. UNTSO remains in Jerusalem to this day. That body can play a role in protecting the holy sites.

In that regard, I recall resolution 904 (1994), which was adopted following the massacre in the Mosque of Ibrahim to guarantee the safety and security of all Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territories and which stipulates that there should be a temporary international presence. That is why I thank the Secretary-General for having distributed and published this important legal study, which stresses the need for international protection through a direct presence in the occupied Palestinian territories, given the recent developments.

I would also like to state that the first article of the Geneva Accord stipulates the shared legal commitment of all States, which have the collective responsibility to guarantee the compliance and implementation of the provisions of that Accord. In addition, the International Committee of the Red Cross, among other bodies, can guarantee international protection by elaborating on this concept.

Finally, measures aimed at protecting Palestinian civilians faced with the violations perpetrated by the Israeli occupying forces and the settlers are essential to addressing the current situation. However, the crux of the problem is the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories. As long as this occupation continues, the Israeli violations will continue, be it is in Jerusalem or any other part of the occupied territories. It is high time that this method of managing the conflict be brought to an end. The Security Council must act quickly to end the conflict by halting the Israeli occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories. We ask the Council to consider the Quartet to be a Council mechanism and to consider the mandate it gave the Quartet, in accordance to resolution 1515 (2003), to achieve a two-State solution based on the borders of 4 June 1967, to be a mandatory step on the path to security and stability in the Middle East.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

**Mr. Vrailas**: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Montenegro and Albania, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

While the Middle East faces multiple challenges today, including the crisis in Syria, the Middle East peace process cannot be allowed to slip from our agenda. It is crucial for the Israelis and the Palestinians, but also for regional peace and security. The increased deadly violence in October, not least in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and Israel, claiming many lives and injuring over a thousand, is a tragic reminder of this. We deeply regret the loss of lives and our thoughts are with the victims and their families. The risk of escalation is a source of great concern. We therefore urge political leaders on both sides to promote calm, encourage restraint and avoid actions which could further fuel tensions.

Violence or acts of terror against any innocent civilian are simply unacceptable. The response of security forces needs to be proportionate and consistent regardless of who is the perpetrator. The continued cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to ensure de-escalation and the restoration of order is crucially important. However, current developments on the ground provide the evidence that the status quo is not an option. They prove the need for a political horizon. The best way of halting the violence is an immediate return to a credible political process. The immediate priority for the parties is to agree on substantial steps, which would improve the situation

on the ground and build a path back to final status negotiations.

The EU position has been clear and consistent. A negotiated two-State solution, which ends the occupation and fulfils the aspirations of both sides, is the only way of bringing the lasting peace and security that both Israelis and Palestinians deserve. By the same token, actions by either side that call into question their stated commitment to a negotiated solution must be avoided. This includes demolitions and the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law, and of projects funded by the EU and EU member States.

The two-State solution will also require Palestinian factions to work together to address the needs of the Palestinian population. We therefore continue to urge them to make reconciliation a top priority. The Palestinian Authority must take greater responsibility in this regard and assume its Government functions in the Gaza Strip. The dire situation in Gaza must be fundamentally changed to allow for improved socioeconomic conditions for the local population and security for all.

Let us also not forget Jerusalem, a city sacred to three religions. The historical status quo at the holy sites, a matter of great sensitivity, must not be altered. Therefore, all relevant parties must open a serious dialogue to ensure the status quo at the holy sites is upheld.

A renewed peace process will require a common international effort. The EU remains determined to play its part, not least through the EU Special Representative for the Middle East Peace Process, Fernando Gentilini. We will work with all sides, through the implementation of existing agreements, to allow Palestinian socioeconomic development and to empower Palestinian institutions in preparation for statehood.

The EU warmly welcomes the statement issued by representatives of the Quartet, dated 30 September, and their consultations with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, as well as with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States and other interested member States. Outreach to regional partners will remain essential, as the Arab Peace Initiative is of key strategic importance for any future comprehensive peace agreement.

The EU offers its full support to the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Mladenov. The Security Council, with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, continues to have a crucial role in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, ultimately sustainable peace will require courageous decisions by the parties to the conflict. We urge them to carefully consider the high price of a continued unresolved conflict, which will continue to be paid by local populations.

The EU continues to follow developments on the ground very closely. It remains determined to do its utmost to preserve the viability of the two-State solution in the interest of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Turning to the conflict in Syria, there is an increasingly urgent need to find a lasting solution that will end this conflict. Only a Syrian-led political process leading to a peaceful and inclusive transition, based on the principles of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/522, annex) of 30 June 2012, will bring back stability to Syria, enable peace and reconciliation, create the necessary environment for efficient counter-terrorism efforts and maintain the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian State.

There cannot be a lasting peace in Syria under the present leadership and until the legitimate grievances and aspirations of all components of Syrian society are addressed. The international community has to unite around two complementary and interlinked tracks: a political one aimed at ending the civil war by addressing all the root causes of the conflict and establishing an inclusive political transition process that will restore peace to the country; and a security one focused on the fight against the regional and global threat of Daesh.

The European Union reiterates its full support to the United Nations-led efforts and the work of United Nations Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura. We call on all Syrian parties to show a clear and concrete commitment to the United Nations-led process and to participate actively in the working groups proposed by the Special Envoy. The moderate political opposition and associated armed groups urgently need to unite behind a common approach in order to present an alternative to the Syrian people.

We urge all those with influence on the parties, including on the Syrian regime, to use that influence to encourage a constructive role in the process, leading to a

political transition and to end the cycle of violence. The EU will proactively engage with key regional actors, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt and international partners within the United Nations framework, to build the conditions for a peaceful and inclusive transition.

We condemn the excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate attacks that the Syrian regime continues to commit against its own people. The Al-Assad regime bears the greatest responsibility for the 250,000 deaths in the conflict and the displacement of millions of people. International humanitarian law applies to all parties, and human rights need to be fully respected. We call on all parties to stop all forms of indiscriminate shelling and bombardment against civilian areas and structures and, in particular, on the Syrian regime to cease all aerial bombardments, including the use of barrel bombs in line with resolution 2139 (2014). We also call for the immediate cessation of the use of chemical weapons, which is a violation of resolutions 2118 (2013) and 2209 (2015). In that light, we welcome the unanimous adoption of Security Council resolution 2235 (2015) to identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, and stress that those individuals, entities, groups or Governments must be held accountable. The systematic targeting of civilians by the regime has led to mass displacements and encouraged recruitment to and the flourishing of terrorist groups in Syria. This calls for urgent attention and action.

We strongly condemn the indiscriminate attacks, atrocities, killings, conflict-related sexual violence, abuses of human rights and serious violations of international humanitarian law perpetrated by Daesh and other terrorist groups. We support international efforts and initiatives to address those issues. We condemn Daesh's deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in Syria and Iraq, which amounts to a war crime under international law. Those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Syria must be held accountable. We reiterate our call on the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

The EU supports the efforts of the Global Coalition to Counter Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. As a consequence of its policies and actions, the Al-Assad regime cannot be a partner in the fight against Daesh. Action against Daesh needs to be closely coordinated among all partners, and needs clearly to target Daesh, Jabhat Al-Nusra and the other United Nations-designated terrorist groups.

The recent Russian military attacks that go beyond Daesh and other United Nations-designated terrorist groups, as well as on the moderate opposition, are of deep concern and must cease immediately; so too must the Russian violations of the sovereign airspace of neighbouring countries. That military escalation risks prolonging the conflict, undermining a political process, aggravating the humanitarian situation and increasing radicalization. Our aim should be to de-escalate the conflict. The EU calls on Russia to focus its efforts on the common objective of achieving a political solution to the conflict In that context, it urges Russia to push for a reduction of violence and the implementation of confidence-building measures by the Syrian regime, pursuant to the provisions of resolution 2139 (2014).

The EU will reinforce its efforts to scale up the implementation of the Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) to deliver cross-border and cross-line assistance in order to help those Syrians most desperately in need, intensify humanitarian diplomacy, seek ways to improve access and protection and promote humanitarian principles and local consensus with regard to guidelines for aid delivery.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

**Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro** (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, I should like to thank Spain and Foreign Minister José Manuel García Margallo for convening this timely open debate. Coming as we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of our Organization, it should serve as a basis to commit ourselves as an Organization to one of the most important pending issues before us — making the Palestinian State a reality and allowing its people to live in peace and security.

At the most recent Council debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question (see S/PV.7490), we marked the first anniversary of the latest war on Gaza. At that time three months ago, we noted the continued construction of illegal Israeli settlements, the confiscation of Palestinian land and the demolition of Palestinian houses and orchards, and called on the Council to meet and take action to

ensure implementation of its resolutions regarding the question of Palestine. We also warned that ongoing violence in a land so sacred to many peoples and faiths was particularly troublesome.

Today, the situation in Jerusalem is reverberating throughout the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and has reached a point of conflagration that, sadly, validates our darkest fears and predictions. The despairing Palestinian youth in Jerusalem and the West Bank are desperate and being driven to acts of violence, as the only way they feel they will be heard. Israeli communities are acting out of fear, engendering a mob mentality that is adding a dangerous dimension to this current upsurge in violence.

The construction of walls between ethnically different neighbourhoods will not solve any of the problems that led to the current situation. In fact, cementing the borders of illegal Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem will only exacerbate the conflict. The only sustainable way out is to seek a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question, based on the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. That will require an end of the Israeli occupation in all its facets and the emergence of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Unless we, the United Nations, and the Council can provide both peoples with a blueprint of hope for a just solution and an end to this seemingly endless battle — for a future where both can live in peace and dignity — we will be complicit in the further deterioration of the conflict, which month after month, year after year, becomes increasingly difficult to resolve.

Three months ago, we spoke of a new international awareness that 20 years of bilateral negotiations, plagued by interruptions, had not yielded the expected result, and that a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian question might need multilateral efforts. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people therefore salutes the Quartet's efforts to provide such a multilateral framework. We likewise reiterate our position that the initiative of the League of Arab States, which proposes a comprehensive peace agreement that would include the normalization of relations between Israel and the entire region, remains a histor c opportunity to bring peace to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples, as well as to their neighbours near and far. We urge Israel to seriously weigh that initiative before events on the ground sweep it aside.

This year, which marks 70 years since the founding of our Organization and the fortieth year of our Committee, the Security Council should urgently assume its responsibility for ensuring that the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable rights. Failure to do so would have severe consequences far beyond Jerusalem, Israel and Palestine. If the nations of the world, united through our Organization and in the Council, wish to win the fight against violent extremism in the Middle East and elsewhere, the Council must find and implement a solution to the question of Palestine, with the formula of two States living side by side in peace and security.

Meanwhile, as an immediate priority, the Council should urgently act to guarantee the status quo with respect to the holy sites in Jerusalem. The proposal to station international observers is promising as a first step towards relieving tensions and re-establishing stability. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people reaffirms its commitment to the principle of a peaceful solution to the conflict on the basis of those premises.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia.

**Mr. Al Saad** (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Sir, for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I would like to express particular thanks to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain for the attention and importance he attaches to this question.

We meet today as young Palestinians are being killed by bullets fired by the Israeli occupation forces, and while blood continues to flow in the courtyards of Al-Haram Al-Sharif, in its vicinity and at its gates. Israeli soldiers and terrorist settlers rush out to kill, destroy and burn. One of them even proudly posted a video of a bleeding Palestinian boy he had shot, while cursing the boy and wishing him dead.

Let us recall the reasons behind the acts of violence that began with repeated acts of aggression by the Israelis against Al-Haram Al-Sharif, when settlers and soldiers stormed the precincts of the Mosque without even taking off their shoes. The Israeli Government tried to impose a new pattern of spatial division and restrictws access based on time slots to one of the sites

most revered by Muslims everywhere. Let us not forget that Israel has failed to protect the Islamic holy sites. The Al-Aqsa Mosque was set on fire by Israeli extremists shortly after the Israelis occupied Jerusalem. There were also repeated attempts to demolish Al-Haram Al-Sharif and to excavate beneath it with the aim of destabilizing the building or causing its collapse. Nor should we forget that Israel demolished the gates of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the protective fences around the courtyard and turned them into places of prayer for Jews without taking their sanctity for Muslims into account. Let us not forget that Israeli extremists set fire to the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron and attacked people at their prayers, and built a temple and a memorial to glorify the base acts of those killers.

Therefore, who can really blame the Palestinians if they mistrust the intentions of Israel and its Government with respect to the preservation and security of the Al-Aqsa Mosque or with rspect to changing its historic status quo? Who can blame the Palestinians for reacting in the face of the Israeli occupation when its officials call for Israeli settlers and occupiers to fight to the death? Who can blame the Palestinians for feeling that settlers can walk into their villages and neighbourhoods like criminals and stalk their children, families and property? Who can blame the Palestinians for trying to defend themselves in their occupied towns and cities, in Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories? And who can deny Palestinians the right to seek international protection to defend their land, their sons and their holy sites?

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls on the international community once again to say no to Israeli occupation, injustice and arrogance, to end to the bloodshed and to hold the Government of the Israeli occupation legally and criminally accountable for its flagrant crimes and violations against the Palestinian people, which can truly be considered war crimes and crimes against humanity. Of that there can be no doubt. Israel must respond immediately to and abide by international decisions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia also calls on the Security Council to intervene immediately to protect our children in Palestine. We appeal to the Council to demonstrate a reaction commensurate with the gravity of the situation and with the seriousness of its responsibility. The Council should not be content with issuing repeated statements. It must act courageously to grant the Palestinian people the right to self-determination leading to the establishment of an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, on the basis of the borders of June 1967, and to end tragedy that has afflicted Palestine ever since.

The Kingdom of Saudia Arabia views with grave concern the ongoing suffering of its brothers, the Syrian people, who continue to face an oppressive regime that bombards their villages and cities with barrel bombs and uses chemical weapons against its own people. In abdicating its own sovereignty, it has granted foreign Powers and militias, which are equally criminal, the opportunity to participate in a genocide that the regime has waged against its own people in a grave escalation that will have serious consequences in the region.

We call on all active parties to cooperate immediately in implementing the Geneva Communiqué (see resolution 2118 (2013), annex II), including the call for a transitional governing body with wide executive powers that seeks to establish a future Syria that will embrace all well-intentioned Syrians, regardless of their religious, political or ethnic affiliations. It will be a Syria that rejects terrorism, violence, fanaticism and extremism and not a Syria for those who have killed their own people.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kuwait.

**Mr. AlJarallah** (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): I have the honour to address the Security Council today on behalf of the States members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Kingdom of Spain on its presidency of the Security Council and the fact that its Foreign Minister is chairing today's meeting.

We meet once again in this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, at a time when the occupied Palestinian territory and, in particular, the occupied city of Jerusalem have been witnessing a dramatically deteriorating situation as a result of the escalation of Israeli military aggression against the unarmed, defenceless Palestinian people and their holy places. Israel's arrogance, disregard for international law and disrespect for agreements with the Palestinian side, as well as the total impunity that it enjoys for its violations and crimes, have brought the situation to a dangerous juncture.

On more than one occasion, the OIC — most recently on 1 October at an extraordinary meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in New

York in the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly at its seventieth session — has warned of the consequences of the continued Israeli provocations, incitement and attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and has condemned those attacks as an unprecedented assault against the inalienable religious rights of Muslims all over the world. They also constitute a violation of the freedom of worship and the sanctity of holy places. If they are not halted, they will further fuel extremism, violence and racism and contribute to igniting religious strife, endangering the prospects of peace and stability in the region.

We renew our warning once again — as the Palestinian President stated before the General Assembly three weeks ago (see A/70/PV.19) — that the continuation of Israeli aggression against Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem risks setting off a religious war, for which only Israel would bear the responsibility. The international community, and the Security Council in particular, cannot ignore those dire warnings.

We cannot talk about the recent escalation separately from its context. It follows decades of occupation, oppression and the denial of the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, the current escalation is continuing within the context of unprecedented levels of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, Israel's attempts to change the historical status quo at Haram Al-Sharif, and the unparalleled increase in the levels of terrorist attacks and crimes perpetrated by Israeli settlers with the protection and encouragement of Israeli forces. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation reiterates the importance of preserving the Jordanian Hashemite custodianship of the Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, including Haram Al-Sharif, as has been exercised by His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein.

One example of Israeli crimes was that committed against the Dawabsha family. A young boy, barely two years of age, was burned alive two months ago by Israeli settlers. That reminds us of similar crimes perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. Furthermore, Israel's repeated attacks on the Al-Aqsa Mosque represent only one aspect of the terrorism that has been fuelled and protected by the Israeli occupation. Recent legislation adopted by the Israeli Knesset allows the occupation forces to shoot at Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied city of Jerusalem, which represents an official cover and endorsement of the criminal operations and an explicit provision of impunity for the killing and oppression of the Palestinian people, ensuring the further loss of innocent lives and worsening the injustices committed against the Palestinian people.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation strongly condemns the policy of execution and deliberate murder carried out by the Israeli occupation forces against the Palestinian demonstrators in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem. Some of those acts, in which children have been targeted, were captured by media cameras. Furthermore, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation condemns the unprecedented escalation in the acts of violence and terrorism by extremist settlers against Palestinian civilians. Only this past month, Israeli violence has claimed the lives of more than 45 Palestinians and wounded more than 1,800 people, including women and children.

Those crimes and violations show the horrible reality of the occupation and the racist nature of Israeli policies, targeting the Palestinian people, their land and holy places. Moreover, the recent Israeli crimes and practices have exposed and revealed Israel's lies regarding its army's ethical code of conduct. How can one leave an injured child to bleed after having shot him? How is it possible that a teenager is shot only because his smile provoked an armed and fanatical Israeli settler? There is no definition for such acts other than that of shameful war crimes. The perpetrators of those crimes must be held accountable, and justice must be done. The International Criminal Court was established for such a purpose.

While the Organization of Islamic Cooperation warns against the dangers posed by the Israeli aggression to regional and international security and stability, we call on the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility by taking measures to stop the crimes and violations committed by the Israeli occupation. There is no doubt that the Israeli authorities consider the silence of the international community in response to its crimes to be an encouragement to continue with acts of State terrorism. That silence encourages them to commit further violations against the unarmed and defenceless Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

We renew our support for achieving peace based on the two-State solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative and international norms, but we underscore that it is not acceptable to remain silent or

merely to express indignation and concern about the unspeakable Israeli war crimes, genocide and atrocities that have been committed against the Palestinian people. It is no longer possible to continue tolerating the occupation while treating Israel as a State above the law that practices terrorism and arrogance with impunity. The perpetrators of those heinous crimes should be prosecuted and brought to justice, and the foreign occupation must end.

The current serious developments affirm the call issued at the recent meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Council of Foreign Ministers for the Security Council to intervene earnestly and immediately with a view to providing international protection for the Palestinian people. The Council must take a decision that establishes a political path to preserve the two-State solution, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions, and set a time frame for ending the Israeli occupation, with international guarantees and binding implementation mechanisms. We expect the Council to do its best to restore security, stability and peace, based on right and justice for the peoples of the region rather than violence, occupation and conflict, and to work towards enforcing its many resolutions that seek to ensure the Palestinian people's exercise of their inalienable and legitimate national rights, particularly the right to self-determination in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

**Mr. Yoshikawa** (Japan) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great pleasure for me to see my friend, the Ambassador of Spain, presiding over the Security Council of the United Nations.

(*spoke in English*)

In reference to the Middle East peace process, nowhere is a political solution more overdue than in Palestine. Japan is concerned by the latest surge of violence, in particular the conflict at the holy sites, because of its potentially inflammatory implications. We welcome Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's vow to maintain the status quo at Al-Haram Al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and Palestinian President Abbas's swift condemnation of the arson attacks against Joseph's Tomb. We call for the cessation of violence and condemn all forms of incitement, including those from Hamas.

In the light of the daily onslaught of violence, we reiterate the importance of maintaining security cooperation between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. Furthermore, while we recognize the necessity to maintain order, we call on Israel to exercise its law enforcement with proportionate measures and to refrain from collective punishment, including the demolition of homes, which may exacerbate an already volatile situation.

The current situation did not arise in a vacuum. Grim economic prospects, social marginalization, illegal settlements and the stagnation of the peace process have all served as fodder for discontent. Too often, the international community, including the Council, has remained silent. We have offered neither tangible advances towards peace nor concrete visions of a viable economy in a future State of Palestine.

The stagnation and difficulties in the peace process must not stop us from making progress when possible. Firm in our belief that a viable economy underpins the feasibility of a two-State solution, Japan has contributed $1.6 billion in support since 1993. Through such projects as the Jericho Agro-Industrial Park, which can provide up to 7,000 jobs with annual economic benefits totalling $40 million, Japan hopes to offer real prospects for a viable Palestinian economy.

Countries with the will and capacity to provide concrete contributions to the political process and on the ground can strengthen rather than dilute the traditional framework of the peace process. We therefore value the initiative taken by the Middle East Quartet to convene a high-level outreach meeting as a side event at the seventieth session of the General Assembly. At that meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Kishida, offered additional aid totalling $12 million and reaffirmed our commitment to play a more proactive role in the peace process.

With regard to the situation in Syria, the Syrian crisis has, over the past five years, taken more than 250,000 lives and uprooted approximately 12 million citizens. In the face of one of the worst humanitarian crises of our generation, Japan will spare no efforts to address both the immediate challenges and the underlying factors of the instability. This year, Japan will provide approximately $810 million in assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons from Iraq and Syria. With particular attention to the Syrian crisis, Japan has already extended more than $1.1 billion in such

assistance as relief and vocational training, with a view to empowering individuals and building communities that are resilient to the allures of extremism.

Japan condemns the rampant acts of terrorism that have taken countless lives and destroyed cultural heritages throughout the region. Such heinous acts of terror have also taken Japanese victims. We note that the situation in Syria has taken on a new dimension with the military involvement of Russia. In that regard, Japan looks to Russia to strictly limit its air strikes to those against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria. Any actions against non-ISIL forces could worsen an already volatile situation in Syria and would be a cause for concern.

We reiterate that there can be no military solution to the Syrian crisis. We therefore underline our support for the United Nations Special Envoy of the Secretary-General in his efforts to work towards a political solution, based on the implementation of the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex).

The increasing volatility in the Middle East calls for concerted effort by the international community, including the Security Council, to facilitate the return of peace and stability to the region. I would like to conclude my statement by assuring the Council that Japan will continue to play a proactive role, both on the ground and in the Council, in contributing to the peace and stability of the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of India.

**Mr. Paswan** (India): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this quarterly open debate at the ministerial level on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. I also thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing.

Our position on the Middle East peace process is very clear. India supports a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel, as endorsed in the Quartet road map and the relevant Council resolutions. India has always played a proactive role in garnering support for the Palestinian cause in multilateral forums. We supported the recent adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/320, on raising the flags of non-member observer States at the United Nations.

Recently, the President of India concluded a State visit to Palestine, where he met with the Palestinian leadership and discussed a whole range of bilateral, multilateral and regional issues. That visit reinforced India's strong commitment to the Palestinian cause and renewed our political and diplomatic support for the State of Palestine in its endeavours to realize an independent and sovereign State of Palestine.

Apart from giving political support to the Palestinian cause, India continues to support Palestine's development and nation-building efforts with ongoing technical and financial assistance. During a visit to Ramallah, the President of India inaugurated the India-Palestine Centre for Excellence in information and communications technology at the Al-Quds University, and handed over a cheque for $5 million as budgetary support to the Palestinian Authority. We have announced several other new projects, in addition to the important bilateral development projects in health, education, skill development and vocational training that we are currently undertaking. India contributes $1 million annually to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East, and has pledged and contributed $4 million to the Palestinian National Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plan for Gaza. We are also implementing development projects in Palestine jointly with Brazil and South Africa within the India-Brazil-South Africa framework.

We are holding today's debate at yet another unfortunate time, when violent incidents and military responses to them, regardless of the reasons for them, are once again taking a toll on people's lives on both sides. We are distressed and saddened by the ongoing situation and the loss of life. We welcome efforts to mitigate the situation and urge both sides to exercise restraint, in order to reduce the levels of tension and create an environment conducive to the resumption of peace talks. India remains firmly convinced that dialogue is the only viable option for effectively addressing the issue. Restraint is imperative if provocation and unilateral actions are to be avoided and a return to the peace process achieved. We remain hopeful and urge both sides to resume the peace process as soon as possible in order to work towards a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution of the Palestinian issue.

India remains deeply concerned about the worsening political and security situation in Yemen. We have urged all the parties concerned in Yemen to resolve their differences amicably, and we hope that the mediation

efforts of the United Nations can help the people of Yemen to find a consensus-based solution.

Turning to Syria, we continue to be very concerned about the ongoing violence and loss of human life in Syria. India has consistently called for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the crisis that can bring all the parties to the conflict to the negotiating table. This must be a Syrian-led process that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people.We also derive hope from and support the efforts of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, to advance the political process by conducting parallel negotiations with four sub-groups focusing on various issues.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

**Mr. Abdrakhmanov** (Kazakhstan): We would like to thank the Spanish presidency for convening today's open debate on the current, unprecedented and extremely grave crisis in the Middle East, which we hope is compelling Member States to act with a sense of responsibility and urgency. If it is not speedily addressed, the current situation in the region will destabilize security globally.

The prevailing tensions in the Middle East are primarily concentrated on the Palestinian issue, and which should begin to ease once the problems there are resolved. Kazakhstan therefore recognizes the Palestinian people's legitimate right to self-determination and strongly supports the creation of an independent State of Palestine, coexisting peacefully with Israel within the 1967 borders. We also support full-fledged membership in the United Nations for Palestine and welcome the raising of the Palestinian flag on the grounds of the United Nations Headquarters. We see a two-State solution as the only viable option for lasting peace, and we call on Israeli and Palestinian leaders to demonstrate the political accountability and goodwill they need to reach a historic peace agreement. We also urge calm over the situation around Haram al-Sharif.

The devastating situation in Syria, which has now spread beyond the region, is one of great concern to the rest of the world. Kazakhstan has continued to support the steps taken by members of the international community, including the United Nations, the League of Arab States, the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as the actions of the Syrian Government and the opposition that are aimed at deciding Syria's political future through dialogue and reconciliation and bringing a speedy end to the violence and bloodshed. We hope that negotiations will continue between the Government and the opposition in the effort to solve the Syrian conflict within the framework of the Geneva II process. Kazakhstan believes firmly that the crisis can be resolved only by peaceful means.

We believe it is critical to establish a counter-terrorism coalition led by the United Nations, with a unified mechanism designed to defeat this scourge and bring its perpetrators and their supporters to justice. The current United Nations mechanisms aimed at countering terrorism, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, should be made legally binding through appropriate Security Council resolutions. During his address to the General Assembly last month (see A/70/PV.13), my President, Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, called for strengthening the global anti-terrorist network by bringing together existing measures under the auspices of the United Nations. We call for the speedy adoption of a comprehensive document on international terrorism, which has challenged our efforts for the past 20 years. We call on all delegations to support this bold and forward-looking approach.

The growing speculation about issues between the two major denominations of Islam has little basis in reality, but tension is nonetheless increasing over the spread of extremist ideology. In that regard, my country proposes to establish an international forum entitled "Islam against Terrorism", with the aim of demonstrating religious unity in the face of the destructive nature of terrorism and violent extremism. We must recognize that the activities of terrorist groups undermine the foundations of the existing world order far beyond the conflict zones of the Middle East. The escalation of violence has resulted in more victims among the civilian population, mainly women and children, as well as the forced migration of civilians from the Middle East and North Africa to Europe. This is the largest exodus of populations since the Second World War, and is of great concern not only to the European Union but also to all of us, the United Nations community.

Finally, we reiterate our robust commitment to ensuring peace in the Middle East, based on freedom and justice for all.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

**Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia): I would like to begin by expressing Indonesia's appreciation to the presidency of Spain for convening this open debate. Our thanks also go to the Deputy Secretary-General for his briefing earlier today.

I would also like to align my statement with those made earlier by the representatives of Iran and Kuwait on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, respectively.

This debate is very timely, being held as it is amid the increasingly worrying escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory. The international community, especially the Council, must therefore do its utmost to ensure that all sides exercise restraint and defuse tension. We welcome the Secretary-General's recent visit to Israel and Palestine and hope that it will help to end the spiraling violence in the occupied Palestinian territory.

That spiral of violence has worsened the hatred and mutual suspicion among the people of Palestine and Israel that has the potential to further complicate efforts to restart the political process. With that in mind, Indonesia underlines once again that there is no feasible solution to the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory other than an immediate start to a meaningful and credible peace process with a view to ending the Israeli occupation. To delay is to permit those feelings of hatred and suspicion to make the prospects of peace more intractable.

Indonesia firmly believes that a just and lasting peace will be sustainable only a through political process and when the peoples of Palestine are allowed to exercise their long-overdue right of self-determination. On that account, we stress the need of the Security Council to create a climate favourable to the resumption of the peace process. The Council must ensure that Israel remains true to its commitment to two-State solution. In this regard, all Israel's illegal activities in the occupied Palestinian territory must come to an end. The air strike on Gaza on October 11, for example, as well as continued provocation in East Jerusalem, notably in the areas of the holy sites, not only are contrary to international law but also generate more tension and anger on the ground.

Certainly, the Security Council cannot continue to sit idly by and retire to its routine activities of convening briefings and debates. We again call upon the Council to assert its Charter mandate and act as a matter of urgency to bring an end to the Israeli occupation. The raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations weeks ago was, in our view, not only a symbolic act but also a strategic one. It was a natural consequence of the growing international recognition of the State of Palestine and its rightful place among the community of nations. It was also a necessary building block towards the eventual two-State solution.

On a different matter, Security Council must also uphold the principle of the protection of civilians in times of international armed conflict. The continued violence committed against the Palestinian people and their properties clearly underlines the urgency of securing international United Nations protection for Palestine. We therefore encourage the Council to work together with the relevant United Nations bodies to respond favourably to that urgent need.

Let me now turn to the situation in Syria. Indonesia wishes to register its outright discontent at the lack of unity of Security Council members in ending the violence and address the humanitarian crisis there, which have spread beyond the region. This organ's lack of political will to even deliberate the Syrian issue, let alone find a resolution to the conflict, demonstrates the dysfunctional nature of the Council. How many more innocent people must die before the Council decides that the time is ripe for it to act?

Indonesia therefore reminds and calls upon Council members to honour their Charter responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, to act immediately and decisively, to end unilateral actions that only complicate the situation, and bring the relevant parties back to the negotiation table to find a comprehensive and inclusive political solution. Indonesia firmly believes that this is the only way to resolve the conflict once and for all.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

**Reverend Monsignor Kassas** (Holy See) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation wishes to thank the Spanish presidency of the Security Council for convening this open debate on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine, which could not be more timely as the region is literally on fire.

As the entire world counts the dead, we must not obscure the plight of the wounded, the displaced and the refugees who are continually subject to great fear and apprehension, even as they flee the senseless violence in

the Middle East, which completely disregards the most elementary terms of international humanitarian law and, indeed, of humanity. This horrific picture plays out daily in the media as migrants and refugees flood the European continent, seeking some small measure of peace and security, but who are not always welcome. What of the children and the women? What of the elderly, the maimed and the handicapped? Where is the distinction between combatants and non-combatants?

My delegation believes that it has a solemn duty to remind the international community once again that extremists are seeking to eradicate religions, ethnic groups and cultures that have been in the Middle East for millennia. My delegation is deeply concerned over the plight of Christians and other groups in territories controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, in particular those who are held captive for ransom and in conditions of enslavement. The Holy See also highlights with sadness the wanton destruction of the priceless cultural patrimony of humankind in the region. Pope Francis, in his address to the General Assembly on September 25, renewed his

> "repeated appeals concerning the painful situation in the entire Middle East, North Africa and other African countries where Christians, along with other cultural and ethnic groups, and including those adherents of the majority religion who have no desire to be caught up in the hatred and madness, have been forced to witness the destruction of their places of worship, their cultural and religious heritage and their homes and property, and are faced with the alternatives either of fleeing or of paying with their lives or with enslavement" (*A/70/PV.3, p. 5*).

Grave conflicts have been waged in the Middle East, including in Palestine, ever since the birth of the United Nations. The violence that characterizes the present situation proves that not only have these problems not been solved or gone away, but that they seem to be increasingly intractable. In recent years, other very serious conflicts, in particular the Syrian crisis, have added to the complexity of the problems in the region.

It is deeply regrettable that the Middle East — a cradle of great civilizations and the birthplace of the three main monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam — should be immersed in a situation that combines every form of conflict and every possible actor: State and non-State combatants, ethnic and cultural groups, fundamentalist terrorism and organized criminality, religious and ethnic hatred, regional and international geopolitical rivalries. In such a context, flooding the region with more and more destructive weapons will not end the conflicts. Instead of arms and munitions, the international community needs to endow the region with more courageous, impartial and persevering negotiations and mediations.

My delegation takes this opportunity to reiterate the Holy See's profound gratitude to those countries of the region that, in spite of their own difficult situations and limited resources, have welcomed and taken care of millions of refugees. On its part, the Catholic Church remains active at the forefront in providing, to all those in need and with all the means at its disposal, humanitarian aid through churches, schools, medical facilities, rehabilitation centers and pastoral care institutions.

My delegation calls on the international community to assist and support the countries of the region in maintaining their political stability and to mobilize the economic resources necessary to enable them to deal appropriately with the ever-increasing number of displaced persons and migrants. We also call on the international community to take action with regard to the situation in Lebanon, with a view to restoring political stability through a revitalization of the country's constitutional institutions through presidential elections.

Let me conclude by citing the words of Pope Francis in his letter to the Secretary-General of 9 August 2014:

> "The most basic understanding of human dignity compels the international community, particularly to the norms and mechanisms of international law, to do all that it can to stop and prevent further systematic violence against ethnic and religious minorities and to protect innocent peoples".

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

**Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this important meeting. Permit me to address the Council today as a main party in the context of this item.

On 24 October, the United Nations will celebrate its seventieth anniversary. However, the question should be: do we have the right to celebrate, and what

are we celebrating? Perhaps we do not, in fact, have that right, given that we are seeing that the aspirations of the founding fathers of the United Nations in the area of peace, security and development have come to naught because of the policies of certain influential States that disregard the principles of the Charter and of international law.

How can we celebrate when we are witnessing mass violations of the provisions of the Charter, leading to acts of aggression, instability and threats to the peace that hinder the development of relations between nations based on respect, the rights of peoples and the principles of non-intervention and of the inadmissibility of the threat or use of force against the sovereignty and independence of States? Perhaps some would say that we do not have the right to celebrate after 70 years of suffering on the part of the Palestinian people.

How can we celebrate the vision of our peoples, particularly the Palestinian people, who have a completely just case that is being undermined because the power of the law is giving way to the law of power? How can we celebrate when we see States using the United Nations as a pretext for invading other countries, toppling their legitimate Governments, killing their leaders and turning them into failed States that have become breeding grounds for international terrorism? How can we celebrate when they are changing the very definitions of concepts — for example, a certain degree of terrorism is termed "moderate terrorism"?

Perhaps we should not celebrate that some have caused the United Nations to fail to uphold its mandate with regard to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon. How can we celebrate half a century of occupation, of turning Palestine into a mass prison, and of apartheid against the Palestinians, the legitimate owners of the land, in Jerusalem and other occupied territories? How can we celebrate the escalating violence and barbarism of settlers, under the protection of the Israeli Government? How can we celebrate the cancerous settlement policy that allows building on any part of the Palestinian territories?

How can we accept that some members of the Security Council have irresponsibly provided support and protection to Israel so that it can continue its provocative policies, in violation of all international instruments? How can we not deal with the question of Palestine in its factual context? Can we really be trying to project the image that this is reciprocal violence and that our differences are only over the degree of that violence? How can we ignore the main reason for this: the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories?

Yes, in two days we will celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations. But on that occasion, what will the United Nations do to help displaced Syrians and those who have been living under Israeli occupation for over half a century? Indeed, the Organization has failed to take any real action aimed at making Israel implement United Nations resolutions on this issue, primarily resolution 497 (1981).

The displaced Syrian citizens in the occupied Golan have legitimate questions about the effectiveness and credibility of the United Nations vis-à-vis their just cause. How could they not ask those questions, given Israel's incessant settlement activities and policies of oppression, suppression and racial discrimination? How could they not when they see Israel supporting terrorist groups, including Al-Qaida's Al-Nusra Front in the Golan region, even as the United Nations does nothing? How could they not, when they see Israel arresting the Syrian Mandela, who spent 27 years in their prison for one reason only: exposing Israeli support for terrorists?

We want to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations, but we want the celebration to be meaningful, a celebration of real accomplishments, not one of words, statements or interventions. We want to realize the aspirations of the founding fathers and their dream of a world of peace, stability and prosperity, based on respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in their affairs — a world that is free of occupation and colonization and in which there is no manipulation of the fate of peoples or changing their governing regimes through foreign intervention. That is what we want; that is the one thing towards which we should work collectively, so that we can hold a celebration that is truly meaningful and satisfies our consciences and the conscience of our peoples.

In conclusion, I would like to denounce in the strongest terms the desperate attempts made by certain delegations, whose names I will not mention, to defend Israel and try to cover up its crimes, particularly through desperate, Don Quixote-like attempts to bring causes before the Security Council that have no relation to the situation in the Middle East. Every time Israel escalates its aggression against the Palestinian people, we find those delegations making misleading statements that escalate the situation, with the aim of diverting attention from the crimes committed by Israel and alleviating international pressure.

For that reason, I am not going to respond to the empty claims made against Syria by those delegations, in spite of the fact that we could say much to refute their claims, as they support and arm terrorists — the artifically created moderate terrorists who are waging destruction in Syria and oppose any peaceful settlement. Those countries are intervening in the internal affairs of Syria and using the Syrian diaspora as a weapon to bring pressure to bear on the Syrian Government to force it change its positions and independent political choices.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

**Mr. Mendoza-García** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We congratulate the Spanish delegation on assuming the presidency for the month of October. We thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain, Mr. José Manuel García Margallo, for his statement.

Costa Rica has decided to participate in this open debate because of the importance it attaches to the situation in the Middle East. As a peace-loving country that has not had a standing army by its own volition for more than 65 years, Costa Rica is a firm believer in the peaceful settlement of conflicts between peoples and States in the context of international law and multilateral diplomacy. As stated by His Holiness Pope Francis, war brings destruction and multiplies the sufferings of peoples.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and especially the escalation of violence in recent months, which we vigorously condemn and in which civilians, including women and children, continue to pay a high price. During the emergency meeting convened by the Security Council on 16 October (see S/PV.7536), it became clear that it was necessary for the international community to take action because it can no longer stand by and bear witness without doing anything about this conflict. As the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, warned, we should ponder the serious consequences of turning this conflict into one of a religious nature. He also underscored that the Israeli occupation and the dwindling prospects for a Palestinian State have contributed to worsening the situation.

My country will never cease to urge that parties resume negotiations on the core issues of the conflict that still exist, based on the obligations already acquired and the agreements previously agreed among the parties and supported by international law and the decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly.

For Costa Rica, it is crucial to bring an end to the armed conflict in Syria and to seek an early political solution, especially with regard to the humanitarian crisis. We hope that it will be possible to explore the real and tangible options, as was recently stated by the United States, to achieve a political transition in Syria, whose civil war has intensified with Russia's intervention on 30 September in support of the Damascus Government against the insurgents. The extension and deepening of the conflict is causing unprecedented humanitarian effects. Every day that tensions increase, there is an exponential increase in the violations of rights and the suffering of the Syrian people.

We are pleased that, due to the ceasefire agreements, the United Nations system, together with its partners the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, has managed to deliver medical supplies in several cities in Syria. However, many people in need are still trapped without access to humanitarian assistance. That is why we urge that assistance be allowed to reach its destination and that humanitarian issues remain outside of conflicts.

One might think that at this point, and given the developments in the conflict, it would be resolved by one or two Powers. On the contrary, we believe that the Security Council is called upon to play a role in order to diversify the conversations and bring about interactions and dialogues that are different from those that have occurred around the crisis in recent weeks.

With regard to the current situation in Yemen, my delegation looks favourably on the statements made by the officials of the Yemeni Government expressing the willingness to participate in peace talks. We welcome the work Special Envoy Cheikh Ahmed has planned with Government representatives and with the Houthis and their allies to complete the preparations for the negotiations, the aim of which is to lay the foundations for a lasting peace that will benefit the Yemeni people.

For all these reasons, we hope the Security Council can fully carry out its mandate in the Middle East to maintain international peace and security and fulfil its duty to promote the full implementation of international justice and the rule of law. As reaffirmed by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica, Mr. Luis

Guillermo Solís Rivera, in his statement in the general debate (see A/70/PV.19) at the opening of the seventieth session of the General Assembly, to strengthen the United Nations at the epicentre of global governance, the Security Council must assume its responsibilities in the maintenance of international peace and security, take into account human rights considerations in its operations and improve its work on conflict prevention.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bangladesh.

**Mr. Mahmuduzzaman** (Bangladesh): I congratulate Spain on assuming the presidency of the Security Council and thank it for arranging this debate, which shows its sense of responsibility and commitment with regard to the issue of the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. The Palestinian issue is now the number one long-standing issue in the field of international peace and security and its resolution deserves the utmost priority. The people of Palestine cannot live with this uncertainty of life and livelihood forever.

We regret the appalling human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and that the repeated appeal of the international community to improve the deteriorating conditions of the Palestinian people remains unheeded. Furthermore, the slaughter of innocent Palestinian children, women and men; the wanton destruction of homes, schools, hospitals and vital civilian infrastructure; and the terrorizing and traumatizing of the entire civilian population in the Gaza Strip in Palestine have become very frequent. The people in the occupied territories continue to suffer due to Israeli blockades, closures, the confiscation of land and the demolition of houses. The illegal separation wall continues to divide and isolate communities, destroying livelihoods and preventing access to their jobs, families, markets, schools and hospitals.

Gaza's borders have been subject to a regime of closure that is without precedent anywhere. The closure is tantamount to the strangulation of an entire population in the form of collective punishment. The quality of life of the Palestinians had already diminished to subsistence level. The periodic escalation of violence only leads to further despair and destitution. Israel is doing so purposefully to generate fear, fury and distress among Palestinians.

We deplore the Israeli policy of collective punishment, forcing Palestinian people off their land, detaining people for a long time without charge, restricting the freedom of movement of and property ownership by Palestinian people, the deportation of Palestinian inhabitants and depriving people from their legitimate claim to natural resources, including scarce water resources. The Government of Israel has continued its settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territory, with a particularly aggressive settlement expansion in East Jerusalem. Those measures have been soundly rejected by the international community and their illegality unanimously confirmed.

Having monitored the situation closely, we would like to register our concern about the grave crisis, in which not a single day passes when civilians are not intimidated, arrested, detained in inhuman conditions and subjected to constant abuse and torture. As a result, the humanitarian and security situations continue in a downward spiral and tensions continue to rise, destabilizing the total peace initiative.

We urge Israel to fulfil its legal obligation, as the occupying Power, to ensure that all inhabitants are safeguarded against all acts of violence or threats; to cease the illegal detention of Palestinian people, including children; to stop the destruction of homes and land confiscation; to allow Palestinian people access to their lands, employment and natural resources; to desist from transferring its population to the territories it has occupied; and to lift its embargo against Palestinians and immediately open all border crossings to allow free movement of goods, persons and humanitarian aid.

We express our total solidarity with the Palestinian people and reiterate our full and unwavering support for their legitimate and inalienable rights to a sovereign and independent State. At this juncture, we demand an end to the Israeli occupation that began in 1967, the establishment of a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, the just resolution of all final-status issues and the mobilization of international support for assistance to the Palestinian people without delay.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

**Mr. Atlassi** (Morocco) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and on your presiding over this very important meeting at a time when the situation in

Palestine is deteriorating in an unprecedented manner. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for his comprehensive briefing, which covered all of the developments in the Middle East region, including the question of Palestine. We also back the Secretary-General's good offices aimed at finding a fair, lasting solution to spare the Palestinian people more bloodshed, which has, however, reached such a scale that the international system bears an unprecedented responsibility for finding a rapid, fair and lasting solution to the Palestinian question in order to extricate the Palestinian people from the current horrendous situation, including that in occupied East Jerusalem.

The situation in Palestine more generally speaking, and in Jerusalem more specifically, which is the third holy site of Islam, has experienced some very alarming developments. There have been brazen violations of international law. Moreover, the sensibilities of Muslims throughout the world have been offended as a result of the actions of the Israeli army and settlers, who have killed innocent people and demolished buildings and homes, and who are systematically attempting to Judaize the city and change the facts on the ground. Such acts are fraught with the risk of igniting a religious war, which will do nothing more than fuel obscurantism and terrorism, which will, in turn, threaten international peace and security.

My delegation thanks Spain for responding to the request by Jordan, the Arab member of the Council, to convene a meeting to consider the question of Palestine and to examine the very serious consequences of Israeli arrogance and its misguided policies, which we entirely reject because they simply disregard international law as they attempt to Judaize Jerusalem and change the status quo through the lynching and massacring of innocents. His Majesty Mohammed VI of Morocco, who is the president of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, has warned against the very situation that we are witnessing today. He rang the alarm bell, and the international community should have taken up its responsibilities vis-à-vis the Palestinian people and Jerusalem more specifically.

His Majesty has repeatedly stressed through all the means available to him, including bilateral meetings and international forums, the need to put an end to the settlements and the Judaization of Al-Quds. He warned against any unilateral actions that could undermine, even harm, Muslim monuments in Jerusalem. His Majesty exchanged letters and correspondence with the relevant international stakeholders regarding the very serious actions in Jerusalem being carried out by the Israeli authorities as part of a plan to change the legal, historical, spiritual and demographic status of Jerusalem. His Majesty has forged many contacts with leaders, including President Abbas, aimed at addressing the very alarming situation in Jerusalem. During the inauguration of the Al-Quds Committee under his current chairmanship in Marrakesh in January 2014, His Majesty stated that we needed to stress that Jerusalem lies at the very heart of the Palestinian question and the Palestinian cause, and that there can be no peace without clarifying the final status and situation of East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent Palestinian State.

We need to focus on the statement that resulted from that meeting, given the fact that the issue of Jerusalem is crucial for the Umma. It lies at the very heart of any political solution, and any harm brought to the Al-Aqsa Mosque will inevitably exacerbate tensions. In following the instructions of His Majesty, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation organized a meeting of a ministerial contact group on 26 September to consider the international measures that could be introduced in East Jerusalem and Palestine. At that meeting the aggression against Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque were both condemned.

A request was addressed to the Security Council that it assume its responsibilities to ensure that the Israeli authorities put an end to their practices and provide security for the Al-Aqsa Mosque, so as to ensure that those violations are not repeated. The only solution to the question of Palestine lies through diplomacy, not war, not the killing of civilians and not or bloodshed. We need negotiations within the established frameworks to forge two States, living side by side in peace and security, two States that cooperate and that we respect. And we insist on the respect of the June 1967 borders.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

**Mr. Mminele** (South Africa): My delegation is grateful to be able to participate in this debate, and we thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/677). South Africa appreciates the statements made by the Foreign Minister of the State of Palestine and the Permanent Representative of Israel.

We also align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We meet at a critical moment of great concern. The escalation of violence and inflammatory rhetoric in the occupied Palestinian territories and East Jerusalem, especially around the holy sites of the Temple Mount — the Haram Al-Sharif compound — including the Al-Aqsa Mosque and Joseph's Tomb, are a source of great concern. South Africa denounces all attempts to change the decades-long status quo in the Holy Land, which has preserved mutual respect for the holy sites of the world's three major monotheistic religions. It is especially disconcerting that the reverence for those sites has been exploited politically and used to incite violence.

South Africa reiterates, in the strongest terms, its condemnation of violence in all its forms, regardless by whom it is perpetrated. We convey our sincere condolences to the families and friends of the victims on all sides who have been killed or injured. We support calls for both the Government of Israel and the State of Palestine to conduct investigations into the latest killings and to ensure that the perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.

We call upon the authorities in Israel and Palestine to respond to the current developments with restraint and in a measured manner. South Africa agrees with the assessment by the Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs on Friday, 16 October, when he stated that the collective punishments carried out by the Israeli Defence Forces are in contravention of international law and should be terminated without delay.

Israel and the international community must understand that the outrage among Palestinians has been created by developments on the ground, which have rendered a viable Palestinian State nearly unattainable. In addition, the depressed economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in Gaza, and the illegal settlement activities that continue unabated have compounded the rage of the Palestinians, who believe that violence is the only option left to them.

Statements and debates in the Security Council over the past years have proved ineffective to address the deteriorating situation in Palestine. We keep meeting in this Chamber to no effect, and it is depressing to realize that the Council has become unable to address major crises, mainly because the narrow interest of a few member States has rendered it toothless. The Council's unwillingness to take meaningful action to move the peace process forward has led directly to the complete breakdown of the negotiation process and to the resulting escalation of tension and violence in Israel and Palestine.

South Africa calls on the Security Council to urgently respond to the situation in Israel. Unified and impartial action by the Council is long overdue. As a first step, we believe that the Council should urgently pave the way for the cessation of violence and create the opportunity for the parties to be able to meet. It is clear that there is no trust between the parties and that the restoration of some degree of trust is required to begin the long road back to the negotiations on a two-State solution. The Council should also adopt measures for the cessation of collective punishment and settlement activities, which are illegal, as well as for lifting the blockade against Gaza. Urgent measures are required to alleviate the suffering on the ground. We believe that only then can a timeline be set for the resumption of the peace process.

My delegation has taken note with interest of the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Council on 21 October, which provides ample examples of the deployment of international protection forces, and we look forward to further discussions on those options in the Council as well as in the General Assembly.

South Africa views developments in the Middle East as intrinsically connected and believes that the only way to achieve sustainable peace in the region is for the international community to work on multiple fronts to bring about the resolution of conflicts. We remain deeply concerned by the civil war in Syria, which has wreaked havoc in that country and beyond for four years. The instability in Syria has affected the entire region and has created ample breeding ground for extremists and terrorism. However, we do not believe that continued or increasing military activity by major Powers can resolve the situation in a satisfactory manner. We believe that concerted and unified action by the Security Council is required to restore peace and stability in the entire Middle East, with due respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

**Mr. Çevik** (Turkey): The Middle East is confronted with an alarming situation. Sectarian and divisive policies, brutal oppression of legitimate demands for democracy, terrorism, and unresolved conflicts result in humanitarian crises, mass displacements and feelings of resentment.

The Israeli-Palestine conflict remains the core challenge and undermines the prospects for lasting regional and global peace. The increasing number of crises in the wider region must not distract us from the urgent need to relaunch the peace process. On the contrary, failing to address that issue will only destabilize the region further, deepen the despair and suffering and lead to more extremism.

The tragedy of Palestinians continues unabated. As tensions recently escalated in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in East Jerusalem, we were reminded once again of how dramatic the situation is in the absence of any real hope for peace. We are very concerned about the latest developments although we are slightly relieved to see that what has been going on for the last months is finally receiving the attention it merits.

Our immediate priority should be a rapid de-escalation of tension. We should not see the current situation as another in a perennial round of skirmishes and wait for the situation to calm down. However, at the same time, we should all be very clear about the root cause of the problem, which is the illegal occupation of East Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories by Israel.

The current escalation began following the entry of Israeli security forces into Al-Haram Al-Sharif. The ban preventing Palestinians from entering the Old City of Jerusalem for two days caused great outrage. It then spread to Gaza when Israeli soldiers opened fire on demonstrators and Israeli air strikes once again took civilian lives. Casualties have been mounting ever since. We strongly condemn the disproportionate use of force by Israeli security forces, which inflames the situation.

Needless to say, at the epicentre of the Palestine cause lies Jerusalem. Jerusalem matters to all humankind. A city that is sacred to Islam, Judaism and Christianity should be treated with utmost respect. The expansion of illegal settlements, violations targeting holy sites, and all other provocative activities aimed at undermining the status and sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif must immediately and unconditionally stop. We consider the Jordanian role as the custodian of the holy sites in Jerusalem crucial for the preservation of the historical status of Al-Haram Al-Sharif as an Islamic sanctuary in all respects.

The situation in Gaza also remains worrying. In addition to eight years of illegal blockade, Gaza has endured three Israeli military operations in the past six years. The humanitarian conditions are so disastrous that, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Gaza could become inhabitable in less than five years if current trends persist. People who live in tremendous despair and insecurity lose their belief in the possibility of a solution and peaceful coexistence. The international community cannot afford to stand idle in the face of that tragedy and allow 2 million people to continue living in such isolation. While the immediate priority must be to address the grave situation and growing frustration in Gaza, only long-term solutions can turn the tide with respect to its reconstruction. In that vein, lifting the illegal blockade and all other restrictions in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009) is of paramount importance.

The historical injustice against the Palestinian people, reinforced by Israel's daily illegal practices on the ground, is fueling hatred, alienation and radicalism in the region and beyond. Palestinians are still deprived of their right to a decent life with dignity, respect and freedom. As the Secretary-General's report rightly underlines, the Palestinians' hopes for peace have been dashed countless times.

We all agree that the status quo is not sustainable. Israel's continuing occupation and its practices in contravention of international law hamper the efforts for permanent peace. The need to find a negotiated political settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, achieving a two-State solution and ending the longest occupation in modern history in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, remains an urgent priority.

Palestine's just cause has been once again confirmed on a global scale by General Assembly resolution 69/320, which paved the way to the raising of the Palestinian flag at the United Nations. That was a significant symbolic step towards full recognition of Palestine.

On the Palestinian side, the need for Palestinian reconciliation is more relevant than ever. The consistent

support and encouragement of the international community is vital in that regard. Once established, the Palestinian National Unity Government, with strong and inclusive institutions, should establish control over the entire Palestinian territory.

The current situation is a sombre image of what is going to happen if the prospects for a two-State solution are lost. Thus the international community should renew its engagement for the solution of the problem and assume its responsibilities. This is long overdue. We need to intensify our efforts towards the adoption of a Security Council resolution that sets a timeframe and that establishes the parameters for peace negotiations based on the vision of a two-State peace. The Council should assume its primary responsibility vis-à-vis international peace and security.

Turkey's commitment to supporting the Palestinian people's right to a dignified life will never cease. We will support efforts to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict and to establish a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Today, I want to focus my remarks on the alarming situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, which requires our imminent attention. However, let me say a few words on the Syrian crisis across our borders, which has left a nation with severe wounds, with more than 350,000 lives lost and over 12 million persons displaced. We see with every passing day that the Syria crisis continues to be a major factor of instability for the entire region and beyond, and a collective response to address it is still lacking.

We continue to assume more than our fair share of the burden of the ongoing devastation. We are extremely concerned by the humanitarian and security impacts of the crisis, which constitutes a major national security threat to us. The current vacuum created on our southern borders as a result of the chaos in Syria has played into the hands of terrorists, who are targeting our citizens as well. In addition, we are currently faced with the risk of a new wave of refugees that has been triggered by the Syrian regime's most recent offensive on Aleppo, as well as by attacks by Daesh. It is neither possible nor just to expect Turkey or any other neighbouring country to face that challenge alone.

The international community should keep in mind that the ongoing atrocities and humanitarian disaster in Syria can be addressed only by tackling the root cause of the problem: the violent oppression of the democratic aspirations and legitimate demands of the Syrians. That tragedy will not end until the people of Syria have a legitimate Government that truly represents their will and enjoys their full consent. On that score, the Syrian people have already spoken. They do not want to live under the authority of a regime that has waged a war against its people.

The international community and the Security Council need to address the Syrian crisis through resolute action. A comprehensive strategy with political, security and humanitarian pillars is long overdue and should be established.

First, we need to respond to the needs of millions of Syrians through the meaningful sharing of burdens and responsibilities. It is a disaster and needs to be treated as such.

Secondly, the international community must act swiftly to provide the Syrians with safety in their homeland by creating safe areas in Syria, free from aerial bombardment by the regime and ground assaults by Daesh. Parallel to those efforts, we must do all that we can to defeat terrorist organizations, such as Daesh and the Nusrah Front and others designated by the Security Council, while keeping in mind that terrorism is a by-product of the crisis in Syria. The challenge of countering terrorism should not harm moderate elements that will play a vital role in the future of Syria and should not delay a political solution.

Thirdly, we should all work for a solution that meets the legitimate demands and aspirations of the Syrian people and ensures a managed and orderly transition to a real political change based on the Geneva communiqué (S/2012/523, annex). The political process that we should revitalize would lead to a united, democratic, nonsectarian, secular and multicultural Syria with its own territorial integrity.

Let me conclude by reiterating our strong commitment to the peace and security of the overall region and our full solidarity with the Palestinian people.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to inform the Council that we still have more than 10 speakers inscribed on the list. I therefore remind speakers that they have a maximum of five minutes in which to deliver their statements.

I give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

**Mr. Munir** (Pakistan): We thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Spain and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Palestine, Mr. Malki, as well as the other Ministers, for coming to address the Council this morning. We also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing.

The entire Middle East today is in turmoil, and the conflagration in the occupied Palestinian territory is worsening. We are sitting on a powder keg. If that is not threatening international peace and security, we do not know what is. Israeli restrictions on Palestinian freedoms and rights, harassment by Israeli settlers, tensions around the holy sites and the bleak prospects for peace have pushed Palestinians onto the streets. There is talk of the beginning of the third intifada.

This morning, Deputy Secretary-General Eliasson was categorical in his briefing. The reason for the current crisis is that the Palestinians do not see any hope. We agree with Foreign Minister Malki that the status quo is unacceptable. We appreciate the Secretary-General's visit to the region. He said in Ramallah yesterday,

> "The only way to end the violence is through real and visible progress towards a political solution, including an end to the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian State".

We believe that time is quickly running out, and the Council cannot remain a spectator as hope continues to fade. By holding two emergency meetings over the past week, the Council has shown that it is fully seized of the matter, but much more is required. We support the Palestinian demand for international protection. The paper on the subject that the Secretary-General shared with the Council yesterday provides options that the Council needs to discuss seriously. We, the international community, cannot allow the wanton disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law.

The Council can help with both protection and final status issues. Setting timelines and parameters to make the two-State solution a reality is both urgent and critical. That will provide the hope that the Palestinian youth yearn for. Only hope can bring the region back from the precipice. The Palestinian flag has found its place at the United Nations. We hope that Palestine will soon be accepted as a full Member as well.

Lasting peace can be achieved only through political solutions, not through heavy-handed tactics and the use of live ammunition against unarmed civilians. The fear among the Palestinians of a changed status of the holy sites in Jerusalem is real and needs to be addressed, and not just by words but by actions. The Council has a responsibility to ensure peace and security in what is the most volatile region of the world. We must never forget the Palestinian civilians, whose struggle for self-determination is epic yet remains unfulfilled.

**The President** (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

**Mr. Boukadoum** (Algeria): I would like to express our deep appreciation to the Spanish presidency for having organized this timely open debate, coinciding with the shocking developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his very candid briefing.

I wish to join the voice of Algeria to those of the overwhelming majority of speakers who have so clearly expressed themselves on what is happening at this very moment in the Middle East and, in particular, in the occupied land of Palestine. While it is unnecessary to add to or go into the details that Minister Riad Malki mentioned earlier, we share and live his feelings. Let me add that in my country the outrage over the images carried by all media is immense. Injustice, abuses and arrogance continue to guide the behaviour of those who think that there are no limits — not even concerning the most sacred and dearest places, such as the Haram Al-Sharif.

The recent and tragic developments and the suffering of the Palestinian people demonstrate that prospects for a peaceful settlement are becoming increasingly unattainable. That is why my country reiterates the following in the strongest possible terms.

First, the very core of the issue of Palestine and the Middle East is the illegal occupation of Arab territories. Whatever happens or by whatever angle one sees the entire question of the situation in Palestine, there is one fundamental issue that should never be forgotten nor set aside: the illegal occupation of Arab land. As long as we — the Security Council, the international community and all stakeholders — ignore or belittle that, there will be increased suffering, injustice and violations of all kinds that will occur before our eyes. It is appalling that settlers and other civilians have been given no more and no less than a kind of licence to kill.

Secondly, as long as a solution to the illegal occupation is not envisioned and the Palestinian people's legitimate national rights, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the Palestinian State capital, are not

recognized, the international community must protect Palestinian civilians, in accordance with all the relevant international conventions. In that regard, I welcome the document issued today by the Secretary-General that provides historical examples, many of the utmost importance and relevance, and could serve as a model for the protection of civilians.

Thirdly, the international community, individual States, the Quartet and the Security Council have a specific responsibility. Debates like today's are necessary, but they must be fruitful and lead to operational measures to de-escalate the crisis and set the conditions to break the current impasse. There is no wall high enough to block the legitimate grievances of young and old alike. Israeli practices are not simply illegal, they are wrong. Just a month ago, the Palestinian flag was raised on the United Nations premises. It is our shared responsibility to make that flag again fly high over its own land, with the establishment of the Palestinian State and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Ambassador of Tunisia.

**Mr. Khiari** (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): As the international community commemorates the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, we remember the horrors that led to its creation and the hope of saving the world from another world war. For the past 50 years, the forces of the occupying Power, in full view of the eyes of the international community, have attacked generations of Palestinians, including women and children. Israel has consistently violated every relevant international instrument and United Nations resolution.

Days, weeks and years pass and nothing happens, except that the situation deteriorates further. Israel does not end its usual practices against the Palestinians and the holy sites in East Jerusalem, or in the West Bank, and Gaza. Israel persists in its colonialist expansion and its attempts to change the status quo with respect to the holy sites and continues to put obstacles in the way of any peace initiative. In 2013 and 2014, the United States attempted to mediate between the parties, but to no avail.

There is no denying that the international community and the Security Council have a responsibility in this matter. Meanwhile, Israel persists in its illegal, immoral practices against Palestinians. It has given free rein to its settlers and to terrorist groups to carry out acts of aggression in Jerusalem, to attack citizens and holy sites, including the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Those actions seriously aggravate the situation and are a clear indication of Israel's plans to change the traditional status quo in that area and escalate the situation.

Israel must shoulder its responsibilities. We condemn all attacks in East Jerusalem and on the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We consider them to be in flagrant violation of the holy sites of the Muslims and their religion. We have warned the Council that there is bound to be a reaction against the aggression and violence; and, indeed, religious hatred and extremism have been growing. We also condemn the serious military escalation and the unjustified use of force by the occupying Power to prevent the Palestinian people from defending their holy sites, even including extra-judicial executions.

The international community and the Security Council must now change their approach to the question of Palestine. A two-State solution that is just and lasting and that will enable the people of Palestine to recover their legitimate rights must be found. If the current situation is allowed to continue, it will simply get worse. The growing sense of frustration and injustice will have devastating consequences for all the parties. In order to put an end to the tension and uprisings in the region, it is necessary to end the occupation and settlement policy, which is, after all, the root cause of the conflict.

I commend the efforts of the various parties to try to find a just solution to the question of Palestine. We appreciate the endeavours of the Security Council, of the Quartet in its new format, of the Secretary-General and of United States Secretary of State John Kerry to defuse the current situation.

In conclusion, I reaffirm that it is high time to consider what can actually be done to protect the Palestinian people and the holy sites of Islam. Tunisia supports the request of President Mahmoud Abbas to the United Nations to provide international protection to the Palestinian people in keeping with international norms and laws.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

**Mr. Oh Joon** (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting at a time when the situation in the Middle East, especially in Israel and Palestine, is on a dangerous course. The recent

cycle of violence arose across the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel, particularly Jerusalem, reminds both the Israelis and Palestinians of the fact that mutual provocations and unilateral actions will not resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue. That simple and powerful truth has been echoing within this Chamber for decades.

The Republic of Korea once again urges all parties to put an end to violence and return to the negotiating table to work out a viable framework to resolve the conflict, with the two-State solution at its core. Preserving the historic status quo for the holy sites in Jerusalem and stopping the expansion of settlements in the occupied territory should be the first step towards that goal. The leaders of both Israel and Palestine must not forget that today's violence and hatred not only destroy their present lives but also deprive their children of any hope for a peaceful future. The past several decades of violence and intolerance are proof of that grim reality, and today's dangerous threats of violent extremism further increase the likelihood of that bleak future. We call upon both sides to have more courage and take more responsibility.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the timely and urgent efforts by the Secretary-General, especially his recent visit to the region, in order to prevent escalation and restore a long-term political horizon of peace. We also look forward to recharged mediation efforts by the Quartet. Every possible avenue should be explored to create a more favourable environment for dialogue between Israel and Palestine for a sustainable peace.

On Syria, the Republic of Korea remains deeply concerned about the heavy toll on civilians as the conflict enters its fifth year. The key stakeholders should immediately sit down together to discuss the common denominator with which to start. In this regard, the Republic of Korea fully supports the ongoing efforts of Special Envoy De Mistura in seeking a political solution, which is the only viable option.

We also strongly urge all relevant parties to prevent and minimize civilian casualties and humanitarian crises. It has been reported that an additional nearly 50,000 Syrian people have been displaced following military offensives around Aleppo. The international community must pay closer attention to the unprecedented humanitarian crisis involving refugees and displaced persons and urgently take all necessary measures to address the related human tragedies. We oppose any actions by any party that hinder the delivery of humanitarian assistance and urge all parties to fully cooperate with the international community's humanitarian efforts.

We also believe that seeking legitimate accountability is part of a sustainable solution. The use of barrel bombs is an explicit violation of resolution 2139 (2014). We welcome the establishment of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, and urge that all parties responsible for the use of chlorine as a weapon be held accountable.

Turning to Yemen, the Republic of Korea welcomes the Yemeni Government's statement on 18 October in which it expressed its willingness to participate in peace talks with the Houthi rebels. We further call on all the parties to make maximum use of this opportunity to forge a sustainable peace and defend the territory of Yemen from the terrorist threat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

We are witnessing the increasing vulnerability of the Middle East as the region faces the multifaceted challenges of violent extremism, terrorism and the vicious cycle of violence and intolerance. This has serious negative impacts on the stability of other regions as well as the entire world. This is also warrants an enhanced role for the Security Council to maintain peace and security in the region. The Republic of Korea will continue to support the Security Council in fulfilling its mandate.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

**Mr. Fesko** (Ukraine): At the outset, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's open debate. Ukraine associates itself with the statement made by the Observer of the European Union earlier today.

Our country is committed to maintaining a balanced and impartial position on the Middle East peace process. We are willing to develop stable and constructive relations with both Israel and Arab States.

On the issue of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ukraine supports the principle of the coexistence of Israel and the Arab States living side by side in peace and security. We support the Middle East peace process and believe that peace in the region can be achieved only if viable mutual concessions are made at the negotiating table. Unfortunately, we are currently

observing the deterioration of the situation in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, where tensions continue to rise.

Ukraine is deeply concerned about a long-lasting worsening of the situation around the Al-Aqsa Mosque. We call on all parties to show restraint and moderation on this issue. We believe that it is important to avoid any provocations that could lead to further confrontations in a very tense regional context. It is important for both parties to find the courage to respect the holy places in accordance with the principles specified in fundamental international documents, particularly those of UNESCO, and the agreements that regulate the status of the Temple Mount complex.

We believe that direct negotiations between the parties is the only way to achieve a peaceful solution, and any unilateral steps will not solve the key problems standing in the way of a peace settlement. The strategic outcome of the direct negotiations is to create two States that will coexist in peace and security, based on the expectations of the international community for a stable, democratic and prosperous Middle East. Ukraine reiterates its position that the Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement should lie within the framework of the unconditional fulfilment by the parties to the conflict of relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, including land for peace, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

With respect to the situation in Syria, Ukraine reaffirms its commitment to the universal principles and basic norms of international law and advocates strict respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Syria. Ukraine strongly condemns the ongoing violence and systematic violations of human rights in the country. We consider that the Syrian Government bears full responsibility for the present condition of the country and for the sufferings of its people caused by the bloody conflict. Fighting between Government forces, non-State armed groups and listed terrorist groups continues to result in death, injury and displacement of civilians and the destruction of property and infrastructure. Parties to the conflict continue to disregard their obligations under international humanitarian law, specifically regarding the protection of civilians.

Ukraine calls for an immediate end to the bloodshed and for the greater use of political and diplomatic means to resolve the conflict. In expressing solidarity with the international community on the urgent need to eliminate the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as a global threat, Ukraine believes that sustainable peace and stability in the region can be achieved only through a political process aimed at establishing a Syrian Government of national unity and restoring the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Ukraine is concerned over Russia's latest aggressive movements in the Middle East, in particular in Syria. While using the slogan of confronting international terrorism as a cover, the Kremlin is yet again carrying out its policy of breeding and exploiting instability along with the backing of anti-democratic regimes. In the light of Russia's continuing military aggression against Ukraine, which is accompanied by direct support and funding of terrorism in Ukraine's Donbas region, Moscow's declared goal of fighting terrorism in Syria appears especially disingenuous. The attacks by the Russian Air Force in Syria, which have led to civilian deaths but have not caused substantial damage to ISIL, raise serious doubts over Russia's ability to play a constructive role in the Syrian crisis settlement process.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iceland.

**Mr. Hannigan** (Iceland): I would like to thank the Spanish presidency for convening today's meeting.

Iceland joins others in expressing grave concern at the present spike in violence in the occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. Acts of terror are unacceptable in all circumstances.

As has been stated, these acts of violence do not occur in a vacuum. Assistant Secretary-General Tayé-Brook Zerihoun highlighted a number of key elements of the context in his briefing to the Security Council last week (S/PV.7536). Among them, he identified demolitions of Palestinian dwellings, ongoing settlements, heavy-handed Israeli military action against civilians and the blockade of Gaza. Collective punishment of the Palestinian population is not only a breach of international law, but it is also demonstrably counterproductive. These ongoing developments on the ground have a key significance for the wider context of this conflict. They add up to the dangerous undermining of the only viable course to peace — a two-State solution.

Yes, there is incitement — on both sides, through the social media, according to Assistant Secretary-

General Zerihoun. But incitement also has a context. Incitement is a part of the violence and is facilitated and given credibility by the wider context of loss of political perspective and a growing despair among the Palestinian population and fear among Israeli civilians. Political leaders on both sides bear a heavy responsibility to encourage restraint.

It is vital that the Council respond urgently and effectively to this crisis. There must be de-escalation and a cessation of all violence from both sides. But the deep distrust that exists between the two parties puts a large question mark over whether de-escalation is possible without external assistance. One Security Council member has commented on the tendency for each side to highlight the provocations and acts of violence by the other side, while seeking to minimize its own actions. There is little chance in the present situation that Palestinians could see the Israeli forces as acting even-handedly.

The Council should look at ways to assist in starting on the long road back to some kind of mutual confidence between the parties. In that regard, we should not forget the huge potential that exists in involving women on all sides. The importance of getting women involved in peace processes was proclaimed by the Council earlier this month, when it marked the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) (see S/PV.7533). In the short term, Palestinians need a sense of security for their own people. The Security Council should look at ways of bringing that about. Palestinians also need confidence that there is a political route to the two-State solution within a finite time period. Israelis must have confidence that their security is not compromised. The urgency is redoubled by the religious dimension, which has become more present since the violence at the holy places in Jerusalem. It is vital that the status quo be maintained, not only in word but also in deed. The Security Council must ensure that the parties are in no doubt as to the importance of that.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Botswana.

**Mr. Nkoloi** (Botswana): At the outset, my delegation wishes to extend its warmest congratulations to the President and his country on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We also appreciate the insightful briefings that we received this morning from various persons, including the statements by the representatives of Israel and the State of Palestine, as well as the Deputy Secretary-General. My delegation welcomes the continued focus by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, on this very important topic. Let me express my delegation's profound appreciation for the opportunity accorded to Member States to debate the pressing matter of the situation in the Middle East, which is taking place against the backdrop of rampant violence in that region.

Botswana attaches great importance to the fundamental principle of self-determination for peoples under foreign occupation. It is for that reason that we remain deeply concerned that, despite the sustained efforts of the Security Council, the Palestinian people continue to be denied their inalienable right to self-determination and independence by the occupying Power, Israel. Botswana continues to believe that there is no alternative to the two-State solution, which implies the coexistence of Israel and Palestine, living side by side, as two sovereign States. That cannot be overemphasized.

Botswana joins the international community in deploring the continuing human rights violations in the Middle East, especially in the interactions between Israelis and Palestinians, in which thousands continue to lose their lives, while many remain displaced with no homes, no access to the basic necessities of life and no hope for the future. We call for an end to the horrific situation that innocent civilians continue to endure, which has resulted in millions seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. The living conditions to which the Palestinian people continue to be subjected are appalling and dehumanizing.

In his briefing to the Security Council on 15 September 2015, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Mr. Nickolay Mladenov, said that

> "the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has left an indelible scar on the people and landscape of the region. Frustration, fear and violence have continued to spiral, undermining belief in finding a way out of the impasse" (*S/PV.7521, p. 2*).

In the light of that statement by Mr. Mladenov, my delegation wishes to encourage the parties to the conflict to return to the negotiating table and resume the long overdue talks and to approach the talks with a spirit of compromise and mutual respect, with a view to reaching a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution. Nonetheless, we note and welcome the

continued efforts of the Secretary-General, the Middle East Quartet, the Security Council and all those who continue to be committed to the peace process for their relentless efforts to see a peaceful end to the conflict. It is my delegation's belief that those efforts require the full support of the international community.

In conclusion, let me reaffirm Botswana's strong support for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We remain hopeful that someday their plight will become history. Both the Israelis and the Palestinians should give proof of their will and desire to shape their future and end this long, drawn-out conflict.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

**Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka): I join other speakers in commending the President for convening this important debate.

The Sri Lanka delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Finding a just and durable solution to the situation in the Middle East has been a priority for the international community since 1948. As long as the question of Palestine continues to be unresolved, the Middle East will never achieve the peace desired. A just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine and an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people can be achieved only through negotiations and a political process that delivers real results and hope. The international community has repeatedly encouraged concrete, credible steps, including a freeze on illegal settlement building, so as to jump-start meaningful negotiations. The parties must refrain from unilateral measures, which undermine the peace in the region. The ongoing settlement activities, which are illegal under international humanitarian law, need to end at the earliest, which would enable a sustainable peace. All sides should refrain from confrontational actions, which lead to a spiral of violence. The parties should build upon existing agreements, including the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The blockade of the Gaza Strip is another obstacle to the peace process. Those restrictions need to be lifted within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009). That would contribute significantly to the economic advancement of Gaza and the well-being of the people. We note with concern that the United Nations is hard-pressed to keep the vast majority of the people of Gaza supplied with the minimum necessities. More than one year after the widespread destruction in Gaza last year, thousands of families continue to live in their damaged homes, with winter approaching. As of August 2015, only one third of the $4 billion pledged by the international community in Cairo in October 2014 has been disbursed. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have noted that up to 100,000 Palestinians remain displaced and live in precarious conditions, struggling to gain access to basic services such as electricity, water, sanitation and medical services.

We also strongly support the work of the United Nations agencies in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which play key roles in serving Palestinians in the areas of their operations. Those areas include Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Recently, UNRWA experienced a financial crisis that nearly affected the operations of hundreds of schools run by the Agency. It is critical to avoid such situations in the future, as they aggravate the already difficult conditions faced by Palestinian children, which may, in turn, also encourage them to engage in acts of violence through desperation.

The situation of Palestinian detainees, including women and children, remains a serious concern. Palestinians are being held under administrative detention without charge or trial for an indefinite period of time. Administrative detention is permitted under international law only exceptionally and for short periods of time, but, regrettably, in the occupied Palestinian territories it remains the norm. Indiscriminate attacks against civilians will only enhance feelings of desperation and insecurity and widen the gap between the parties. The security needs of the people of Israel must also be respected. A climate conducive to peace will be encouraged if each side takes an approach sensitive to the other's concerns. We hope that all parties will engage constructively and sincerely to end the conflict and enable lasting peace.

Terrorism originating from the Middle East region has the potential to pose a serious threat to the security and stability of many countries. In today's interconnected world, it is very easy for agents of extremism to spread their ideologies across national borders. In that regard, the lingering question of Palestine is one of the main

factors driving the recruitment of terrorists in the region, as well as worldwide. We also call for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, which is essential for the preservation of overall peace in the Middle East.

In conclusion, Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its support for Palestine's application for admission to full membership of the United Nations.

We also support the implementation of United Nations resolutions, including resolution 242 (1967), regarding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to statehood, and the achievement of the two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

**Mr. Alrowaiei** (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, we would like to thank the Kingdom of Spain and its Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mr. García Margallo, for presiding over the Security Council this month and for convening today's open debate at the ministerial level on the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. I also thank Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson for his briefing at the beginning of this meeting.

The Council is meeting today to debate an item on its agenda that is discussed in open debate on a quarterly basis, namely, the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. This meeting is being held at a time when the region is witnessing worrisome turns and developments, all under the shadow of the violation by the occupying Power, Israel, of the sanctity of Al-Haram Al-Sharif and the killing of many innocent people. There is no doubt that the exacerbation of the crisis will continue until Israel abides by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, which is applicable to all the occupied Arab territories, including occupied Palestinian land.

Such confrontations have led to the killing of many Palestinians and to the injuring of many others by the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Kingdom of Bahrain, in the face of such deplorable acts, expresses its strong condemnation of the continued aggression and the ongoing breach of international law, as well as of the flagrant violations of humanitarian and moral norms. Such illegal, inhumane acts are likely to snuff out any possibility for peace, as well as to further fuel tensions, violence, extremism and hatred, which will not build human relations or build bridges of respect, as called for by all religions. Indeed, such acts will not lead to building peaceful societies that uphold dignity, culture and peaceful coexistence. There is no doubt that for Israel to terrorize the Palestinian people by using violence and brutal force will do grave harm to the peace process and will place additional obstacles in the path of any peaceful settlement.

International intervention is urgently required to put an end to Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people, to provide appropriate protection and to avoid any setbacks that could lead to further deterioration and bring harm to the entire region. The international community should create the environment necessary for the resumption of negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, in order for them to take up fundamental issues in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and internationally agreed terms of reference.

The position of the Kingdom of Bahrain is firm when it comes to Palestine. It is a position based on fundamental pillars, namely, the need to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions; to respect the international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative; to apply the two-State solution; to establish an independent Palestinian State within the pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital; and to lift the unjust and illegal siege of the Gaza Strip. In that regard, the international community must shoulder its responsibility to ease the suffering of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. Without question, a peaceful settlement to the problems of the Middle East must include an end to Israel's occupation of Arab and Palestinian lands held since 1967, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan; the total withdrawal by Israel from remaining occupied Lebanese lands, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions; the establishment of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State; and a just solution ensuring the return of Palestinian refugees to their towns and villages, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). We stress the need to implement the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and for unconditional respect for the principles of international legitimacy.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

**Mr. León González** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We support the statement delivered by the representative

of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The situation in the region of the Middle East continues to be of grave concern to the international community. Just a year after Israel's most recent attack on the Gaza Strip, in which more than 2,000 Palestinians lost their lives, among them at least 299 women and 556 children, and which plunged that territory into terror, death and mass destruction, the Palestinian people continue to be the victims of acts of aggression perpetrated by Israel, which continues to occupy their land, murder their children, destroy their homeland and shred their inalienable rights, including the right to self-determination.

Despite the periodic open debates in the Security Council, which have demonstrated overwhelming support for the Palestinian cause, the Council has unfortunately failed to adopt a single resolution demanding that Israel put an immediate end to its military occupation of Palestinian and Arab territories; that it lift the blockade against the Gaza Strip; that it halt the construction and expansion of its illegal settlements and of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territory; and that Israel be held accountable for the war crimes it has committed and its collective punishment of the Palestinian people. We cannot allow the Palestinian cause to continue without a just resolution.

This organ must fulfil its obligation to promote a negotiated settlement that guarantees the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory; the peaceful coexistence of two independent States; the establishment of the independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, with its capital in East Jerusalem and with the pre-1967 borders; along with a just solution to the problem of Palestine refugees, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

We are convinced that the solution to this long-standing conflict could contribute to significantly reducing current tensions in the Middle East.

My delegation once again reiterates in this Chamber its strong condemnation of the Israeli settlement campaign in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, and of all the measures, policies and practices connected to that campaign, which, in addition to the construction and expansion of illegal settlements and the wall, includes the destruction and confiscation of Palestinian land and property, the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian families and the transfer of settlers into occupied Palestinian territory, among other violations of international law, international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions. My delegation also condemns the violence, provocations and incitement to hatred and terror by Israeli settlers, and the arbitrary detentions and mass incarcerations, and demands that they end once and for all. Cuba reaffirms its full support for the admission of Palestine as a full Member of this Organization.

Many of the pledges made for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip following the terrible bombings and massive destruction inflicted by Israel in July and August 2014 have not materialized. We call on all members of the international community to fulfil their commitments and work to rebuild that devastated area.

Achieving peace in Syria will be possible only through respect for its people's right to decide their own destiny. A political solution through dialogue and negotiation is the only alternative to the conflict in Syria. Anyone fuelling the conflict from outside with a declared goal of regime change bears responsibility for the thousands of civilian casualties that have mounted up during four years of fighting. We would like to once again emphasize our alarm at the loss of innocent lives as a result of the conflict in Syria and once again condemn every act of violence committed against civilians there. But claiming to protect human lives and combat extremist elements cannot be a pretext for foreign intervention. That is why we call for the withdrawal of any foreign presence in Syria without the consent of the Syrian Government and appropriate coordination with its authorities. The United Nations, particularly the Council, should urge for an immediate ceasefire as a preliminary to dialogue and negotiations, and should not promote initiatives that encourage further tensions and that have yet to produce concrete results.

The world's leaders recently adopted the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for the next 15 years (General Assembly resolution 70/1). Now begins the most difficult stage, which will require significant financial and human resources to implement. We have no right to sacrifice present and future generations to the horrors of war and the devastation it causes, no matter where it occurs. The Security Council has a crucial role to play in helping all the peoples of the Middle East to achieve their aspirations to the well-being, peace and development that they deserve. Its

members should be advocates for peaceful solutions, without foreign interference, that will safeguard States' sovereignty and territorial integrity and make a decisive contribution to preserving the lives of the people affected by the conflicts in the region.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

**Mr. Ntonga** (Zimbabwe): I would like to thank the Spanish presidency for convening this important open debate and for giving this issue the significance it deserves. I would also like to thank the Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his insightful briefing, and the Ministers who participated in the debate for their constructive proposals.

Zimbabwe aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are seriously concerned about the acts of violence in and around the holy sites and by any attempt to change the status quo in East Jerusalem. Access to the Temple Mount and other holy sites must be preserved under the status quo arrangements. The recent tragic events are a stark reminder of the plight of the Palestinian people, owing to a systematic denial of their right to self-determination. We welcome the insistence of the President and other Council members that urgent steps must be taken to stop the violence. Furthermore, as some other delegations have pointed out, this is not a conflict between equal forces. The Council must therefore take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of Palestinian civilians.

The current violent actions are a direct result of hopelessness and despair at the grim prospects for a two-State solution, which nonetheless offers the best prospects for peace. Israel's security cannot be guaranteed by using excessive force to inflict collective punishment on defenceless Palestinian civilians. The spiral of violence feeds into extremism and terrorism. The situation requires that the Security Council act decisively to put a halt to all such violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

The Security Council shares the blame for the longest continuous occupation in modern history. No measures have been taken to stop the aggression against the Palestinian people, and that has emboldened the occupying Power to act with impunity in blatant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. The Council must protect the people in the occupied territories. In that regard, we look forward to the Secretary-General's report on ways to respond to President Abbas's request for international protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international law and the relevant resolutions.

The deteriorating situation in the occupied territories makes it even more urgent to relaunch the political process, end the impasse and restore hopes for a two-State solution. We welcome the recent initiatives taken by the expanded Quartet to revive the peace process, and those by some members of the Security Council. The Council should shoulder its responsibilities and create conditions conducive to negotiations by engaging both parties to the conflict, and other international partners, in discussions on a time frame for commencing negotiations. We would like to underscore the importance of salvaging a two-State solution, based on the pre-1967 borders and the need for a just and comprehensive peace for Palestine. Zimbabwe reaffirms its solidarity with the Palestinian people and supports realization of their legitimate national aspirations and inalienable rights, including to self-determination and freedom in an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side in peace and harmony with the State of Israel.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Israel has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I intend to accede to her request. However, I would remind all delegations that are not Council members that they are limited to one additional statement only.

**Ms. Meitzad** (Israel): Israel cannot remain silent in the face of the reckless and inflammatory allegations about my country made earlier by several delegations. Sitting here today in the Council, I was amazed to hear that several Arab countries still insist that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at the centre of the problems in the Middle East. They say this while thousands of their brothers are being massacred by the Syrian regime, slaughtered and executed by the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, or terrorized by Hizbullah, Jabhat Al-Nusra or Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis.

Turning to Lebanon, I find it amazing that the representative of a country that for two years now has failed even to elect a president has the nerve to criticize

the Prime Minister of a democratic country. Let us not forget that in Lebanon a terrorist group that assists the Al-Assad regime in slaughtering civilians is part of the Government — half of the Cabinet, in fact.

Regarding Saudi Arabia, it is the height of audacity for the representative of a country that routinely carries out public beheadings, including of teenagers, to criticize the measures that Israel takes to defend itself. A young Saudi protester, Ali Mohammed Al-Nimr, age 17, is set to be beheaded for encouraging protest during the Arab Spring. This is a country that engages in indiscriminate bombing and is attacking anything that moves. It recently killed at least 70 civilians when it bombed a wedding party in Yemen. Perhaps countries that engage in the indiscriminate bombing of innocents should not raise the issue of war crimes.

Earlier, we heard the representative of one of the world's worst human rights abusers, Venezuela, accuse Israel of abusing human rights. That Jeffersonian democracy deprives its citizens of democratic rights by repressing and imprisoning opposition members. Here in the Council, Venezuelan leaders enjoy full freedom of speech; the same is not true for their constituents back home. Venezuela's accusations and conspiracy theories cannot be answered in a brief right of reply. It is disheartening that one of the 15 representatives on the Council should utter such baseless accusations.

As for the Palestinians, it is unfortunate that they are repeating their false accusations and breached the protocol of the Security Council by disrupting the Israeli representative's speech. Interestingly enough, no one seemed surprised. The Palestinian observer did not answer one particular question: Why does Palestine refuse to negotiate? Its baseless accusations and malicious lies have been answered time and time again, including in our speech this morning, and I do not want to waste the Council's time by discussing them. An offer was made yet again in the Council for President Abbas to discuss peace here at the United Nations or in Ramallah, Jerusalem or anywhere else.

For those who have spent the entire meeting listening to hateful incitement, let me repeat the words of Israel's Permanent Representative: "Like people everywhere, the people of Israel seek to live in peace and to see their children prosper". Despite the difficult time my country is facing, we remain confident in the promise of Israel's future. We call on the Palestinians to join us on the path to peace and reconciliation. Together, we can create a better future for both our peoples. As we said this morning, we aspire to peace and we are committed to the status quo.

**The President** (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more speakers on my list.

*The meeting rose at 7 p.m.*